05
PlayStation Magazine

PlayStation

Official UK
PlayStation
Magazine No. 22

Meet the REAL Lara Croft inside!

About to make a huge splash!

Rapid
Racer

Made in the UK
The games that make Britain Great

PLUS! Tomb Raider 2, Time Crisis, Crash 2, Apocalypse & Pandemonium 2

REVIEWED:

ACTUA GOLF 2

TIGER SHARK

WARCRAFT 2

WAR GODS

MACHINE HUNTER

SPACE JAM

DRAGONHEART: FIRE & STEEL

KONAMI OPEN GOLF

HYPER TENNIS: FINAL MATCH

The World's Best-Selling PlayStation Magazine

I DON'T WANT A HOLIDAY IN THE SUN...

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Start up

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH'S CD?

This month we have brand new playable demos of *Jonah Lomu Rugby* and *Riot* – a vision of rugby 100 years from now. Plus great rolling demos and a couple of old favourites are fondly remembered.

EXCLUSIVE DEMOS 5 Vol 2

RIOT
PLAYABLE Rugby meets rollerball in this 21st-century sports game

JONAH LOMU RUGBY
PLAYABLE Rugby is, in fact, rugby in this 20th-century sports simulation.

RAYMAN
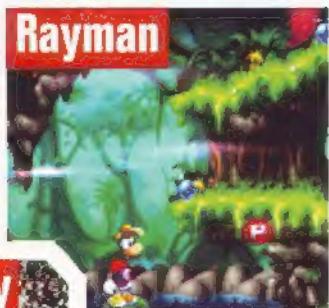PLAYABLE A look back at this classic platformer as it comes out in Platinum

FADE TO BLACK
PLAYABLE And EA's 3D adventure remembered as it also becomes a bargain
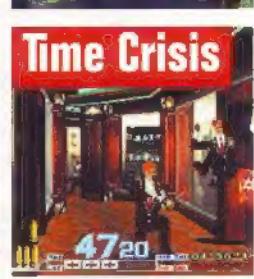
ROLLING demos
SOUL BLADE
TIME CRISIS

Disc 05: Vol 2

Riot — Playable
Mad future sport meets basketball and rugby in this playable romp. Two teams face one another in this all-action scrapfest.

Jonah lomu Rugby — Playable
You too can pretend to be a huge All Black in the first Rugby sim to hit the PlayStation. It might not look too good but it plays very well.

Fade to Black — Playable
It might have been out for ages but a good game is always a good game. Play the first level in our Platinum demo special.

Rayman — Playable
Try out the first four levels in this special demo. But watch out, this new Platinum game is very hard.

Time Crisis — Rolling
We've played it and it's brilliant. Take a look for your self just how great it really is.

Soul Blade — Rolling
For those who haven't got round to buying this arcade classic here's a glimpse of what you're missing.

Apparently, there is a 96% chance that you are a bloke. It's fairly likely that you're between the ages of 16 and 35. You almost definitely own a PlayStation and spend an average of about ten hours a week playing it. Your favourite game is either a racing one or a beat 'em up. I can even go as far as guessing that you liked our reviews of *Porsche Challenge* and *ISS Pro*, but probably didn't even get round to reading what we thought about *Lost Vikings 2*.

I know this because you told us in our latest readers survey. Thanks to all that answered. The overriding story, however, was that you like to play top quality PlayStation software. Okay, you don't have to be Mystic Meg to foretell that, but I can also predict that over the next 140 pages that's exactly what you'll get. From brilliant sequels to great new original games the issue is packed. I'd say it's a fair bet that'll you'll enjoy this issue.

Rob Pegley (Editor)

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update

You ain't seen nothing yet
PlayStation games galore on the way

For once E3 was devoid of big announcements. What is now the biggest games show in the world has also recently become a platform for the release of stunning news from the big three of Sega, Nintendo and Sony. This year, however, no price cuts were revealed to gasping journalists. No lavish parties were thrown to celebrate the launch of *PlayStation 2*. And no jingoistic our-console-is-better-than-yours arguments were entered into.

What was apparent, however, was Sony's continued commitment to providing a huge base of games for the PlayStation owner. In all there were 145 PlayStation games present in Atlanta with at least 100 of the games set for a release in the UK before the year is out. This dwarfed the number on show from Nintendo and Sega, with the latter only having some 30 or 40 games on display.

Sony's message at the show was 'Our games speak for themselves' and with titles on display such as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Crash Bandicoot 2*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Time Crisis*, *Colony Wars* and *Tomb Raider 2*, there could be no accusations that quality was suffering as a result of quantity.

Perhaps the most exciting of all the PlayStation games on display though was *Metal Gear Solid* from Konami. This, together with more on E3 and the 25 *Most Wanted* PlayStation games at the show are detailed over the next two spreads.

One announcement Sony did make though, concerned the current number of PlayStations that have been sold. Up until the end of May, some 16 million PlayStations had been shipped worldwide. And while this is a huge figure, Sony believe that a staggering 31.5 million will have been sold by the end of the financial year in March 1998. These are figures which firmly establish the PlayStation as the most important console currently on the games market.

Stars of the show

Two of the stars most in demand at the show in Atlanta were Bruce Willis and Rhona Mitra. Bruce Willis was there with Activision answering questions on *Apocalypse*, in which he has been motion captured as a 'buddy' for players to control. But you'd have been forgiven for not recognising the name Rhona Mitra. Her outfit can leave you in no doubt, however, that she is the real Lara Croft and star of *Tomb Raider 2*. Rhona was there with Eidos promoting the sequel to *Tomb Raider* and taking journalists through her moves. For more on Bruce, turn to page 32 for an in-depth look at *Apocalypse*. Meanwhile on page 27 you can read about a Day in the Life of the real Lara Croft.

Crash 2, Resident Evil 2 and Time Crisis, just some of the show's stars.

(1) Rhona Mitra, the 'real' Lara Croft. (2) Bruce Willis who was digitised for *Apocalypse*.

Sony are hot favourites to win the rights to the Spice Girls game, with Nintendo and Sega also in the running. Not content with being flavour of the month in the pop world, top of the book best-sellers list, and future stars of screen and TV, the Grrrl Power group now really, really wannabe in their own videogame.

There is debate over what form the game will take. One suggestion is that a *Tomb Raider* clone could see the girls running amok, very similar to their *Wannabe* video. A platform adventure could also be a possibility, while a *PaRappa*-style game could be great fun. Whatever form the game takes, it is likely that Sony's huge userbase and links with the music industry would make them favourites to get the game. Certainly the bookies see it that way.

Show stoppers

The cream of Atlanta

We could have printed a host of pictures showing lines of anonymous journalists and programmers queuing in front of blurred monitors. We could have printed quote after quote from company figureheads on the state of the industry. But at Atlanta this year, the E3 show was all about games. And so that's what we've concentrated on.

There were close to 150 PlayStation games at the show and we will be bringing you details on all of them. For now though, we've concentrated on the pick of the show. After much deliberation, we have decided on the most important 25 games in Atlanta and have detailed them over the next four pages. These are the games that people will be talking about for the next six months – make sure you remember their names.

Apocalypse

A Bruce Willis lookalike was on hand at Activision's impressive stand where the large crowd were mostly there to see *Apocalypse*. The futuristic 3D action adventure is packed with frantic shooting and has a strong plot, but it's the range of camera angles and the presence of digital-buddy Bruce Willis which really sets it apart. A mix of *Doom* and *Resident Evil*, more details of which are available on page 32.

Captain Blasto

Although little more than 20% completed, Sony have high hopes for *Blasto*. A 3D galactic adventure in which Blasto battles an unstoppable force, the game did little to impress, but with a release date still not confirmed and backgrounds barely in place, Sony must know something which will mark this title out for success.

Castlevania

Latest in the long-running saga of *Castlevania* titles, and the first on the PlayStation, *Castlevania – Dracula X* is simply a re-vamped (excuse the pun) version of the 16-bit game. Polygons take over from sprites and back-grounds are enriched, but general feeling is that greater improvements could have been made. It will still prove a very popular title though.

Colony Wars

With five titles on display, Psygnosis had an impressive show. *Colony Wars*, their fast-moving, graphically-brilliant space combat game rivalled the *F1* sequel and *G-Police* as the pick of the bunch. What impressed the crowds most was the light-sourced, fully-textured, hi-res 3D environment.

Cool Boarders 2

After being something of a surprise success, Sony seem to have put genuine effort into the sequel and it could eventually become an essential race game. Certainly the split-screen, two-player mode is very playable and had the crowds addicted.

Crash Bandicoot 2

Ironically, the sequel to *Crash* is the game Naughty Dog always wanted to make, and with around 100 levels and a play area twice the size of the original, you can see why. Better looking and better playing, this follow-up platformer will again do very well. We have more on the title on page 46.

Apocalypse was the pick of the bunch from Activision, backing up their claim that they mean business in the PlayStation market. Bruce Willis is the hero in this 3D action adventure.

Meanwhile at the Psygnosis stand, Colony Wars was heavily praised by all that saw it. Psygnosis had an impressive array of games on display, including the sequel to F1, as well as Rascal and G-Police, but it was their space-combat game which took the eye.

Croc

One of many *Mario*-styled games at the show, *Croc* is a 3D platformer with a very cute lead character and great graphics. Together with *Rascal*, this was one of the better *Mario*-wannabes at the show, and one of the best pseudo 3D games yet seen on the PlayStation. The Fox Interactive release is due out in September.

Deathtrap Dungeon

The long-awaited title from Eidos which is the product of Iain Livingstone's *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming past was third in the pecking-order on the Eidos stand, but was much appreciated by serious gamers. The eerie adventure will be covered by us in more depth next month.

Fighting Force

Although somewhat shadowed by *Tomb Raider 2*, *Fighting Force* was nevertheless warmly greeted in Atlanta. Playing like a 3D adventure, the game takes beat 'em ups in a whole new direction due to its clever interaction of characters with scenery (cars can be dismantled to make weapons for instance). Backdrops vary and the four main characters all have around 50 moves. More of this great game can be seen on page 44.

Final Fantasy VII

The biggest game ever released in Japan, over 3.7 million copies of *Final Fantasy VII* have been sold for the PlayStation. The epic fantasy roleplaying game, full of humour, magic and adventure is now due out in the UK and the crowds were hugely impressed by its superlative graphical splendour.

Formula One '97

Although in many respects people knew roughly what to expect from this title, the 'Stations on display were still in great demand and crowds were impressed at the improvements made to the title. Notably the split-screen two-player option was considered a great success.
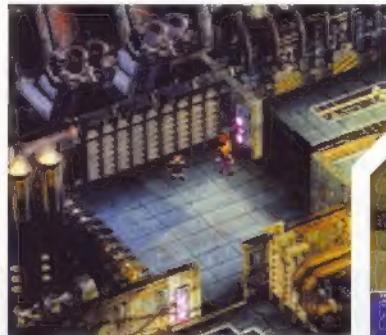
Final Fantasy VII **is the biggest selling PlayStation game ever in Japan, and it didn't take people at E3 long to realise why.**
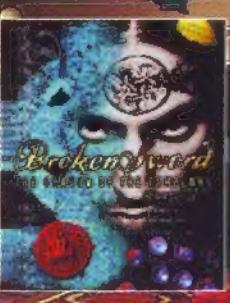
Gex 2 had many admirers. Not least for its huge variety of camera angles.

Metal Gear Solid was many people's vote as the best PlayStation game of the whole show.

Gex 2

Yet another of the *Mario* clones, but like *Croc*, this is one that is actually of some note. Programmed by the increasingly influential Crystal Dynamics, this will make people look at the Gex character in a completely different light because the gameplay is such a vast improvement on the original platform outing. Lots more on this particular title next month.

G-Police

After lofty claims that it would be the Christmas number one, people are starting to believe that Psygnosis may have a point. The helicopter shoot 'em up – as ever, set in the year 2097 – has very impressive FMV sequences blended in with intense gameplay. Crowds had a blast.

Kurushi

This 3D puzzle game is immediately addictive and wasted many a show-goers valuable time as it proved difficult to get away from. Likely to rival *Bust-A-Move 2* as the console's most addictive game, this puzzler sees you controlling an on-screen player who has to dispose of 3D blocks in a systematic sequence. Has to be played to be understood, but once you start...

Lost World: Jurassic Park

Electronic Arts have predicted sales of 500,000 copies of *Lost World* in Europe before the end of the year. Although that boast sounded bullish, there is no doubt that this tremendous license will be backed up by thrilling action and some stunning graphics.

Lost World: Jurassic Park was EA's biggest game of the show. Bigger even than their sports titles.

Metal Gear Solid

Judged by many as the game of the show, *Metal Gear Solid* is a tactical espionage game with many brilliant graphical effects. Konami believe that the game stretches the PlayStation further than it ever has been, and few at the show would have disagreed. .

Nightmare Creatures

Talked about as a combination of *Tekken* and *Resident Evil*, *Nightmare Creatures* is a 3D action adventure set in London in the early nineteenth century. There is a great mood to the game, together with smooth animation and backdrops, and a host of characters.

Show-goers were obviously impressed by the game's originality and for more details, see our PrePlay on page 76.

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

The big hope for GT interactive is the ground-breaking *Abe's Oddysee*, the first of a series of five *Oddworld* games. With a seamless mix of film and animated gameplay, and a communication system which gives characters the ability to converse, opinion was split over the title. You can of course make your own mind up next month when we have a complete extra demo CD of the game.

Pandemonium 2

We have more on Crystal Dynamics latest outing on page 36 this month, but crowds were astounded by the psychedelic graphics of this platform sequel and the bizarre nature of the gameplay and its characters. Brilliant to watch and even better to play, this will please console owners of all ages.

PaRappa The Rapper

The ultimate party game and creator of its own genre, the musical adventure, this quirky title had the crowds in hysterics and you'll see why as soon as you get the chance to rap. Funny characters, catchy tunes and very addictive gameplay, this was a much appreciated title. Look out for the review soon.

Rapid Racer

This month's cover game is totally unique in terms of racing titles. The unique replication of wave patterns, together with over 250,000 fractal-generated courses is quite unrivaled. Realistic handling, dynamic racing and hi-res 50 frames per second action had the crowds amazed. See exactly why on page 66.

Resident Evil 2

Predictably crowds were huge for the Capcom title. Still not due for release until next year, it nevertheless drew admiring stares. With improved graphics, characters and backgrounds the title's eagerly awaited. In the meantime, *Resident Evil: The Directors' Cut* will be released to fill the void for *Resident Evil* fans.

Street Fighter EX3D

Much-hyped, but perhaps not quite up to the standard people had expected, *Street Fighter's* latest incarnation prospered mainly due to the

lack of *Tekken 3* at the show. Still likely to be a massive hit on its release, the title will be monitored with interest.

Time Crisis

Special agent Richard M lier moved from arcade to console with great ease as Namco showed *Time Crisis* to an appreciative audience. Although slightly less detailed and textured, the game was virtually unchanged in the transition, and together with the GunCon 45 light gun – which will be packed in with the title – it should prove a massive hit this year (a PrePlay of the title can be found on page 62)

Tomb Raider 2

With the 'real' Lara Croft on site and not an unused PlayStation on the stand, *Tomb Raider 2* was one of the most eagerly sought after games in Atlanta. With brand new locations, numerous refinements, a smoother control system and even greater graphical detail, it didn't disappoint. For more details on the game, turn to page 30.
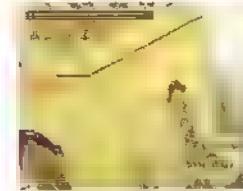
Tomb Raider 2 was predictably the most sought after game at the show, and it certainly didn't disappoint. Lara was as popular as ever.

All bets are off

Surprisingly, there were no major surprises at E3. Events predicted for E3 had included details on new hardware such as the M2 being revealed, or Sega talking about their plans for Black Belt. At the very least Nintendo were rumoured to be showing off the N64DD, but all three deflected questions on any of their future hardware plans.

Price cuts were the next area threatened with announcements, but

Sony, Sega and Nintendo have held firm for now, with any price-cuts presumably being held back for Christmas.

Even more surprising was the lack of arguments and shouting amongst the console big guns. If anything, there seemed simply a united front of optimism towards the whole games industry and the resurgence it is undergoing. Now who would have bet on that?

The land of hope
and glory

From Essex girls, to Boyzone in Blackpool, the UK is the place to be if you're interested in all things PlayStation. Who needs Atlanta...
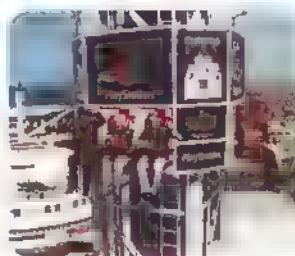
Blackpool: Dublin's very own, Boyzone, flew over to Blackpool Pleasure Beach earlier this month to sing at the grand opening of the 'PlayStation', a new ride which sees you catapulted 210ft up a metal frame before you plummet to the ground in freefall.

After performing some of their greatest hits (10 minutes work at most), the dreary Dubliners got a chance to be some of the first people to try it out. And unfortunately it turned out to be quite safe.

Warwickshire: Following on from the success of *Jonah Lomu Rugby*, Codemasters have announced details of their latest project, the official game of the *RAC/AutoTrader British Touring Car Championship*.

Like the new Psygnosis *F1 '97* all the figures are based on the current season so you'll be able to take John Cleland's Vauxhall Vectra out for a spin around Brands Hatch or Thruxton. To add to the racing atmosphere *Top Gear* racing bloke, Tiff Needel will be providing pre- and post-race commentary.

Other driving features will include realistic crashes and racing speeds in excess of 160mph. All 16 cars have been laser-scanned to heighten accuracy and the developers have called on the original track data from the Ordinance Survey, with all tracks being accurate to within 8omm.

London: With the latest Batman film riding high in the charts and plans announced for new Superman and Spiderman films, we knew it wouldn't be long before a superhero game appeared on the PlayStation so there was little surprise when an early copy of Capcom's *Marvel Super Heroes* popped on to our desks.

Featuring some of the best comic heroes ever to appear in print, the *Street Fighter*-style gameplay allows you to control such wonderful characters as the Hulk, Spiderman and Wolverine. It looks great.

Sheffield: Gremlin Interactive, one of Britain's largest software companies, have announced plans to float on the Stock Exchange later this year. Valued at £45 – £50 million pounds, the company are looking to raise the funds to boost their already impressive line-up.

Established by Ian Stewart in 1984, Gremlin Interactive first tasted gaming success with the wonderful *Monty Mole* and *Thing on a Spring*. Recent titles include *Reloaded* and the excellent *Actua Soccer*.

Company founder and joint chief executive, Ian Stewart, said: 'There is such an appetite for our games that we are planning to double the number of games titles we release annually'

Gremlin also recently bought Dundee codeshop DMA Design.

Essex: One man was arrested when Essex Police, working in conjunction with ELSPA investigators, seized a large haul of imported counterfeit PlayStation software when they raided a house in Loughton earlier this month. The gold discs were due to be sold by mail order for the sub-Platinum price of £15.

Head of ELSPA (European Leisure Software Publishers Association) Crime Unit, John Loader, said: 'Piracy and counterfeit costs the Industry over £150 million each year. This is one of the largest raids the Crime Unit has initiated and we have succeeded in taking out one of the main players dealing in imported counterfeit CDs'. ELSPA have seized £10 million worth of CDs so far this year.

ELSPA

Fast cars and fast women this month, with Lara Croft, Elizabeth Hurley and the Spice Girls all cropping up in our American column

Lara's hair's gotten longer. Yes, this is the single most exciting piece of news for American gamers right now. Not that the scene's sleepy over here. Far from it. It's just that *Tomb Raider 2* renders everything else prosaic and dull. First screens-shots of the game hit US websites a few weeks ago, and sent traffic numbers up through the murky caverns of mediocrity and into stellar heights. Newsgroups hummed with genuine excitement about one of Britain's greatest exports. Initial impressions of the game are a mixture of gape-mouthed admiration and muted disappointment. It's very like the original which is not necessarily a bad thing. Additions include more enemies, less straight lever-switching, more moves, dynamic lighting and more interactive environments in socially busy situations. That, and the fact that Lara has longer hair.

Meant me, American business magazines have traded in their old pictures of the Fab Four and Carnaby Street when illustrating articles about Britain's latest Renaissance. Now we get the Spice Girls and Lara. American gamers were recently asked to vote on who should play Lara in the Hollywood film of the game. Most of the vote was cut between Elizabeth Hurley and Sandra Bullock with Liz getting the edge because of her 'cute' English accent.

And so on to *Freakin Fast* or should that be *Running Wild*? Publisher Universal changed the name of the game due to 'copyright issues', though there are some who suspect that it's yet another example of a bland safe bet gainsaying a game-name which actually looks interesting.

Blue Shift's *Running Wild* features six characters that must race against each other on foot (an innovation in itself) Players can choose to be a speedy rabbit, a strong elephant, or manifold other humanoid animal characters. Imagine *Crash Bandicoot* meeting *Wipeout* and you've got a rough idea. Platform elements and power-ups add extra dimensions along with the inevitable changing racing conditions.

Still on a racing track, watch out for EA's *NASCAR*. After the success of *Andretti Racing*, EA wisely decided against slapping a '98 on a slightly updated title, and instead revamped the engine, added an entirely new licence, and created a whole new racing experience. For US racing fans, few licences could be better than that of NASCAR. (In this country we are largely ignorant of the far superior joys of Formula one). The sport has been growing remarkably in recent years and offers drivers who are quickly becoming as popular as proper sports stars. *NASCAR '98* provides some excellent racing with a solid visual flair. The game features 17 tracks, of which 10 are real plus seven fantasy tracks. With races against 23 computer opponents, the game is a bit of a thriller. Cars often bump into one another at top speeds, and the physics engine models the deranged results nearly perfectly.

The vehicles deform in real-time showing the damage they acquire during the race. *NASCAR '98* is one of the most enjoyable racers for the PlayStation, and when it is finished later this year it might even challenge Psygnosis' *Formula One '97*.

Other games which US players have an eye out for in the near future include two movie licences. *The Lost World*

Lost World: Jurassic Park, is likely to rival Turok as THE dinosaur game on the PlayStation.

looks marvellous at gameplay stage, and sounds much like the tremendously exciting but ultimately crap movie of the same name. Watch out for niggling doubts about gameplay though. *Batman and Robin*, meant me, could be Acclaim's surprise hit. The game is a departure from the last several *Batman* titles which were critical flops due to their unoriginal platform gameplay. *Batman and Robin* completely turns away from the platform gameplay and instead offers a huge 3D environment for players to explore.

Acclaim has used some of the tricks it learned while working on *Turok*. It has utilised something similar to the random moving warps in *Turok* to offer fresh gameplay in every level. As a player moves through the world to complete missions, random criminal events 'happen' along the way giving players a chance to intervene.

And finally. This column has recently reported Sony USA's strained relationship with sections of the press following a series of leaks from within its organisation. The unpleasantness reached a zenith when a top Sony official was quoted in a trade paper stating that the country's leading games website had 'really f***** themselves' after publishing some screenshots without Sony's permission. In fear of this manner of preposterous machismo posturing, most of the games press in America is cravenly subservient to Sony. Thankfully, not all of them are so willing to hide under the table every time some unnamed corporate weasel shouts nasty words. The screenshots stayed up. Hurrah for the First Amendment. God bless America

Acclaim's Batman and Robin looks set to rid Acclaim of their reputation for shoddy platform games sold on the back of a film licence. At last.

NASCAR Racing from Electronic Arts provides some excellent racing, has superb graphics and is one of the most sought after licences in America. Certainly more so than Formula One.

Gotham:
Following on from the successful film, those masters of film tie-ins, Acclaim have picked up the rights for the latest Batman film, *Batman and Robin*.

Having been rightly slated for their, frankly crap, *Batman* efforts in the past, Acclaim are working hard to make sure the fourth incarnation is much better. Early impressions are positive with certain quarters describing it as a gothic version of *Tomb Raider*. High praise indeed but from what we've seen so far it may not be that wide of the mark.

California:
It's not often you get a game which pokes fun at Greek Mythology, mainly because few people know about it. Virgin chose *Herc's Adventures*.

After choosing which famous Greek bloke to play, Hercules, Atlanta or Jason, players dash off on their quest to save 'the cradle of western civilisation' from oblivion. If you don't know your classical history, that's Greece by the way.

Each character has their their own special trait to help them fight nasty God Hades and rescue God of Fertility, Persephone, before the mortal world withers and dies.

It all sounds very serious and high-brow but given that LucasArts are producing the game it ought to be one to look out for. We'll have more details next month.

New York:
Considering his game isn't even out for another couple of months Abe is certainly getting a hell of a lot of publicity. Billed as Sony's *Mario*, the little bloke from Rupture Farms is already gracing T-shirts and keyrings across the globe.

GT Interactive, European publishers for the *Oddworld* games are backing the September release with its biggest ever marketing spend to make sure it does as well as they hope. See our disc next month for more!

The World of PlayStation

'New York, London, Paris, Munich, everybody talk about PlayStation'. Not quite the correct song lyrics but far more appropriate to this spread. So here's what's going on in the world...

Tokyo: Fresh from their recent PlayStation conquests of *Rage Racer* and *Soul Blade*, Namco are set to turn the platform world upside down with their latest outing on the PlayStation, *Kronoa*

You play the eponymous hero, a curious boy living in the village of wind, on a quest searching for the last remains of the Phantomile, a mystical country which disappeared 600 years ago.

Helped by his fairy friend Huppo and a magic ring, *Kronoa*'s quest takes him through six different stages. With gameplay essentially the same as *Crash Bandicoot* and Namco's usual flourishes, the game ought to be special. We do worry about the dubious storyline, though.

Tokyo: The year is 2029, the game is *Ghost In the Shell*, and biology and cybernetics have become one science with humans given direct computer interfacing, prosthetic limbs.

All this progress hasn't stopped terrorism and wars erupting around the world. You play Major Motoko Kusanagi, a semi-cybernetic agent sent to maintain peace...at any cost.

Recently described as '*Jumping Flash* for adults', Sony have big things planned for this Manga marvel when it is released later in the year.
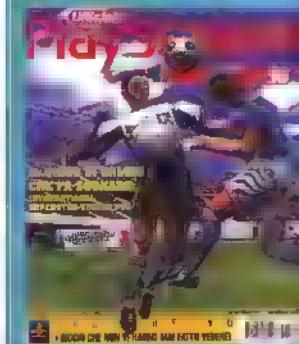
JAPAN COLUMN

Tekken meets *Tamagotchi*, and murders are rife in a city hospital in the latest news from the home of Sony

[1] and [2] *Parasite Eye* from SquareSoft. Adapted from a successful Japanese novel, this arcade adventure could be better than *Final Fantasy VII*. [3] and [4] *Midnight Run*, a very technical racing game.

Midnight Run, from Konami, also known as *Road Fighter 2*, is an arcade-style racing game which takes place in a town full of real traffic. Despite its *Ridge Racer* appearance, *Midnight Run* is a far more technical game, and the player has to slalom between the cars and avoid small vehicles to achieve any success. As in the arcade version, the PlayStation game offers three courses – Sunset Trial (easy), Starlight Heat (Medium) and the gorgeous Midnight Run (Hard). There are four different sports cars from which to choose, with varying colours and the option to choose either a Normal or, for expert players, a Tuned car. Players can luxuriate in two different views, and although a back mirror would have been welcome, there is also a proximity radar similar to *Daytona* which works fairly well. The version of *Midnight Run* presented at the Tokyo Game Show was very early and this version is still far from convincing, with high-pixelisation, blocky polygons and bad collision calculations. However, the game is in early stages of development and its graphics are sure to have been improved by the time it's released.

The oft under-used combo of RPG/Beat 'em-up/Tamagotchi that is *Monster Farm*, a novel artificial life fighter from Tecmo.

Tekken meets legendary programmer Tamagotchi in Tecmo's artificial life game, *Monster Farm*, which is due out this summer. The object of the game is to raise monsters and then prepare them for arena fights, during which the monsters act independently, their success determined by how well you've raised them. *Monster Farm* is an innovative PlayStation game and is the first to use a data disk. Tecmo are planning to release a second disc containing more than 250 additional monsters. Normal music CDs may also be introduced during the game and the monster's education will be influenced by the type of music. *Monster Farm* is the first artificial life game on the PlayStation and should benefit from the positive Tamagotchi influence. Expect many more to follow.

Back in the world of straightforward beat 'em ups, *Dragon-Ball GT* is the latest in the long line of polygonal fighting games due to be released by Bandai. It uses all the features that made the original *Dragon Ball* games such a success – air combat and impressive combos – but all the fights in the PlayStation version are in real-time 3D.

Parasite Eye was initially a successful novel, which was then adapted as a movie last year in Japan. SquareSoft are to release a 3D adventure game of the same name later this year. The action takes place in New York and the heroine is Aya Brea, a young detective. The game is set in a 3D mapped world, in which Aya has to follow her investigation through a dark NY infested with monsters. Graphically it looks even more gorgeous than *Final Fantasy*

VII, but currently Square are playing their cards very close to their chest on this one. The game is being co-developed by a team made up of Japanese and Americans, and appears to be aimed at an older target audience. The whole thing is a much more ambitious project than *Final Fantasy VII*, with Square enlisting the help of CG Professional from Hollywood for the graphics. The director is Steve Gray (*True Lies* and *Apollo 13*) and the Art Director is Darnell Williams (*Casper*). The scenario is constructed by Takashi Tokita who was responsible for the *Final Fantasy IV* scenario, as well as *Crono Trigger* and *Final Fantasy VII*. Similarly, battle and character design will also be done by former members of the *Final Fantasy VII* team.

Also from Square is *Chocobo De Battle* which is likely to be their first arcade game. The game is being developed by Square USA and is a fighting game designed by some brilliant CG movie specialists, including Paul Ashdown (*Jurassic Park*) and Ron Sabatino (*Batman Forever*).

Finally, *Maria* is an adventure game, from Axela. Set in a hospital, the aim is to discover why a new patient (the eponymous Maria) has been admitted. Already infamous for the ways in which your character may be mutilated during the game, *Maria* was previously released on PC and PC 98 (Japanese PC format) and has experienced much success. Because of its frightening content, however, the game was censored. The conversion should hopefully be released in time for Christmas.

TALKING SHOP

Platinum games expand
Third line-up set to be released

With the first batch of Platinum games proving incredibly popular, retailers knew it wouldn't be long before a second range was announced. So when Electronic Arts announced plans to release five of their first generation titles the only surprise was the length of time it took to release them.

Expectations were high, as classic games like *PGA Golf '96* and *FIFA '96* were included in the range. Steve Slater, of Game in Sheffield, reports that sales have been encouraging. 'Most have been going really well, with *PGA Tour '96* selling the most'. Strangely enough it was our favourite in the group, *Fade To Black*, which was the least successful.

With customers warming to the Platinum range, we wondered which other games would be next. It turned out to be Gremlin Interactive with *Actua Soccer* and *Loaded* followed by Ocean with *Worms* and *True Pinball*, all to be released in July. Next up will be *Bust A Move 2* and *Alien Trilogy*, both from Acclaim. If you're wondering which title to buy, PSM recommend *Bust A Move 2* – it might be old but it's still the best puzzle game on the PlayStation. The two from Acclaim will also hit the shops in July.

PlayStation™

PlayStation™

ChartTrack
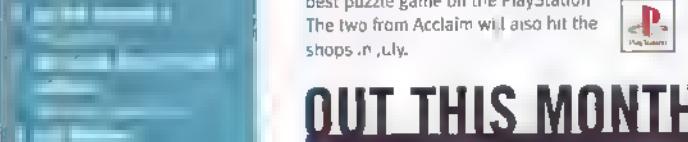
OUT THIS MONTH
THE-LATEST-PLAYSTATION-RELEASES

July

In a month when two of the most anticipated PlayStation games for the last three months were finally released, sales were bound to be buoyant. Geoff Knox, manager of 101 Computer Games, spoke of this month's releases: '*ISS Pro* has been incredible. It was a total frenzy over the weekend – it seemed everyone wanted to get hold of a copy. It just proves that if the gameplay is good then all the rest is trimmings'. *Rage Racer* sold well, as we expected. 'It sold a lot but nothing like *ISS Pro*, though it'll probably end up selling more than *ISS Pro* in the long run'. Next month shouldn't be such a bad month, either, with games like *V-Rally* and *Syndicate Wars* finally reaching the shops. Other than these two it could be worth you looking out for one or two bargains.

ON SALE NOW!
Information supplied by 101 Computer Games Luton.

Monster Trucks	Psygnosis	PSM17	7/10
Syndicate Wars	Electronic Arts	PSM21	9/10
V-Rally	Ocean	PSM21	9/10
Transport Tycoon	Ocean	PSM20	6/10
Machine Hunter	Eidos Interactive	PSM22	7/10
Swagman	Eidos Interactive	PSM20	6/10
PowerPlay Hockey	Virgin Inc	PSM20	7/10
Tokyo Highway Battle	THQ	PSM19	7/10
Nanotech Warrior	Virgin Interactive	PSM19	5/10
Trash-It	GT Interactive	PSM19	6/10

PlayStation Magazine RECOMMENDS

Rage Racer
Any fan of racing games must own a copy of *Rage Racer*. It's as simple as that. Rather different to the two predecessors, *Rage* is a much more dark and accurate take on driving with a lot more technique required to be successful. Give it an hour and you'll be hooked.

Syndicate Wars
Initially due for release a couple of months after the PlayStation's UK release, *Syndicate Wars* is finally released this month. There are few games with the same level of depth as this incredible game. A truly violent look at the future. Marvellous stuff.

V-Rally
Designed to be as accurate as possible, *V-Rally* is probably the most realistic driving game on any system. Playable in either arcade or simulation mode, you'll initially find it difficult to stay on any of the 45 tracks. A truly wonderful game once you're well practiced.

It's been three months since we reviewed *ISS Pro* but thanks to that bane of our life, slippage, it has only just reached the shops. If you only get one game this month get this one. It is by far the best football game ever made. A perfect combination of graphics and gameplay.

Retro footie

Here we go, here we go... Again?

With the trend in retro footie games leaking onto the market it was only a matter of time before some of the greatest games in the Amiga football catalogue made the transition to the PlayStation.

The most popular football game ever written, *Sensible Soccer*, still prompts people writing in, begging us to ask Sensible to develop a PlayStation version. We found out recently that plans are in the offing to bring this title to Sony's machine. Hopefully the 32 bit influence won't harm what was a wonderful footie experience

In the Amiga years, though, opinion was always divided when the title for the best football game was being handed out. While most went for *Sensible Soccer*, there were always hardcore fans who preferred Dino Dini's *Kick Off* series. This battle is soon to be repeated with Anco currently hard at work on a PlayStation *Kick Off*

While we're talking about really old football games it would be remiss of us not to mention on the latest news about the *FIFA* series, itself dating back to 1993. EA have just announced how they intend to use their official World Cup licence. In a cheeky move they will be releasing a *FIFA: Road To World Cup 98* based on the qualification stages. Closer to the actual finals they will be releasing the proper World Cup title.

The big question on, of course, is how these games will fare against the modern classics of *ISS Pro* and *Actua*.
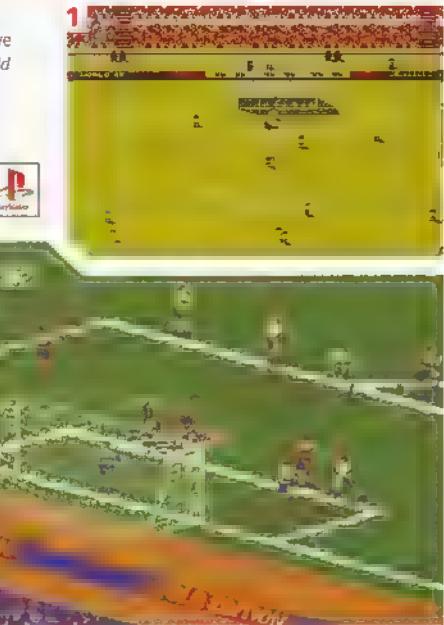
[1] *Sensible World Of Soccer*, surely the best footie games before *ISS Pro*. **[2]** *Kick Off* always gave *Sensible* a good run for its money. **[3]** *FIFA '93*, arguably the best 16-bit football game.

GREAT MOMENTS IN VIDEOGAMING

Number 21:
Issue Golf 2 - A hole in one

There you are, you're stood at the tee, your partner has just pulled off a fantastic drive. Tiger Woods would be envious of and you're in trouble. You look down the fairway and the pin is just in range. You adjust your stance, the wind is perfect so you take a swing. Crack! The ball is airborne. It's looking good, it's looking good, it's looking fantastic. Oh hell, it's hit the... he's just pulled off a hole-in-one. You simply turn to beat.

Analogue pads

It's all in the thumbs

No sooner have Sony Japan released the new analogue pad in Asia than Sony Europe announce plans to bring the new controller to the UK. Featuring two analogue controls, different shoulder buttons and an effective rumble pack, the controller is really nice to use.

Details are sparse at the minute for the UK release with rumours suggesting the European controller won't have the rumble effect. Sony will be providing more details closer to the release date.

In the meantime, sales in Japan have been very swift, with UK import companies charging between £35 and £60 for one. The UK price has yet to be finalised but it's expected to be somewhere between the lower import price and that of a normal pad. There are already a few games on the market which can be used with the new controller such as *Porsche Challenge*, *Rally Cross* and *MechWarrior 2*

Your thumbs fit nicely in the bowl of the analogue controls and don't slip as often as we thought they would. A lovely piece of kit.

In *Power* this month

Crash Bandicoot returns

The folks have been working overtime this month to make sure the latest issue of *PlayStation Power* is as good as the rest of them. If not better...

The main feature of the month is how to get the perfect job in the PlayStation industry from magazine editor to games scriptwriter (watch out for a page from the Editor of the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine*, no less.

Their big game of the month is *Crash Bandicoot 2* with a massive six page feature telling you pretty much everything you could want to know about the il critter. It's full of exclusive material never before revealed

There's also another wonderful cover-mounted tips guide featuring in-depth hints, cheats and player's guides for *Rage Racer*, *Iss Pro*, and *Excalibur* amongst others, as well as, incredibly, ratings for every game ever released. Add this to all the usual up-to-date news and reviews, and you've got another winning issue. At only £2.95 you simply have to out and buy it. You know it makes sense. Watch this space next month for the new look *Essential PlayStation!*
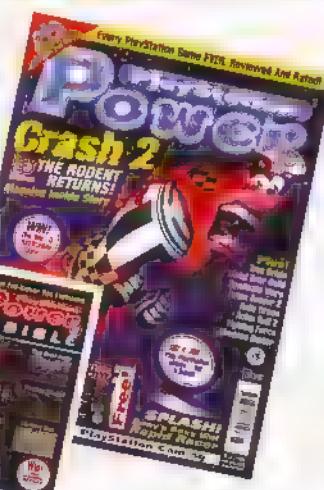
RUSH HOUR CAN BE MURDER

For
www.

"Tokyo Highway Battle is a real shocker. Seemingly coming from nowhere, this will sell faster than naked pictures of Tiffany from Eastenders."

Total PlayStation

90%

JALECO

THQ International Ltd,
4 The Parade, Epsom,
Surrey, KT18 5DH

TOKYO HIGHWAY BATTLE

What's the score?

Fast times and PlayStation highs

After last month's appeal for different games, we were inundated with high scores for *Cool Boarders*. By far the best scores we received were from Patrick Cowan in Edinburgh. He obviously spends a lot of time with his PlayStation as he sent an entry for *Victory Boxing* as well.

By the time you read this, *Rage Racer* will have been on sale for three weeks, giving you ample time to work on your best scores. We better warn you though, you'll have a job to beat our times. Good luck.

Cool Boarders is the latest game we've been getting high scores for, do you reckon you can beat the times of Patrick Cowan detailed below?

COOL BOARDERS
Patrick Cowan, Edinburgh

Novice Track

Total Ranking:	7556 points
Time:	1m07.320
Stage One:	22.535s
Stage Two:	20.790
Stage Three:	23.048
Trick Total:	4344 points
Best Trick:	1250 points

Advanced Track

Total Ranking:	6662 points
Time:	2m09.135
Stage One:	42.213
Stage Two:	53.223
Stage Three:	33.699
Trick Total:	3692 points.
Best Trick:	1186 points

Expert Track

Total Ranking:	7310 points
Time:	2m18.000
Stage One:	33.303
Stage Two:	48.549
Stage Three:	55.000
Trick Total:	3370 points
Best Trick:	1031

Total Ranking:	9952 points
Time:	1m16.150
Stage One:	23.641
Stage Two:	29.343
Stage Three:	22.691
Trick Total:	7773 points
Best Trick:	1905 points

RIDGE RACER
Lee Crowley, Boston.

Beginner	58.897
	1m57.830
Beginner extra	59.671
	1m59.699
Mid-level	48.422
	2m39.810
Mid-level extra	50.144
	2m47.128
High-level	1m14.031
	3m53.998
High-level extra	1m14.462
	3m49.096
T.T.	1m07.944
	3m37.531
T.T. extra	1m11.275
	3m41.841

VICTORY BOXING
Patrick Cowan, Edinburgh.
98 wins, only one loss with 82 title defences including 82 KO's, 15 TKO's and one decision. And not a single ear bitten off in the process.

If you're constantly beating all your mates at your favourite PlayStation games, why not enter the Blockbuster Games Tournament next month where you'll be able to pit your wits against some of the best games players in the country.

All you have to do to enter is visit your local Blockbuster who'll give you a time for the in-store heats of Namco's fantastic racing game, *Rage Racer*. Games players with the top 20 lap times will be invited to a Grand Final at the Sports Cafe in London on August 27 to battle it out. Whoever emerges successful will receive 'a games crazy fun filled trip to San Fransisco'. And the chance to appear in a game designed especially for the winner.

If you're interested, heats take place between July 21 and August 3 with the finalists announced in-store on Wednesday August 11. For further details contact Blockbuster video on 01895 256866

Prince's Trust CD

It's all for charidy, great mates

Older readers may remember the last time the software industry released a charity compilation – the Spectrum and Commodore 64 compilation tape, Softaid. Since then things have been very quiet on the charity front until Sony announced plans for a charity PlayStation disc in conjunction with the Prince's Trust earlier this year.

The Prince's Trust CD uses a similar format to our cover-mounted CDs, comprising 10 playable demos, three videos and a competition to win funding from the Prince's Trust to set up a development company.

Among the demos included are the first available Yaroze game, the shoot 'em up

Snow, a full *Tomb Raider* level, *Destruction Derby 2* and an exclusive *Porsche Challenge* demo. If you fancy a break from playing games you can watch the 15 minute preview of PlayStation software ranging from *MDK* to *Depth*, or watch a film about the latest developments on the Yaroze system.

As we mentioned earlier, there is the opportunity to set up your own games development company with the help of the Prince's Trust in the design a game competition. Runners up can win £750 of Sony hi-fi equipment, free SCE games for a year and subscriptions to our wonderful magazine.

Ray Maguire, MD of SCEE, said: 'We hope to raise £250,000 for the Prince's Trust. This

project is about giving something back to the age group who buy PlayStations, and about proving that video games can actually be of benefit'.

DD2 is on the charity demo disc.

MENTAL KOMBAT

This month the boys promoting the PlayStation's two big racing games are on the starting grid and revving their brains ready for a few laps of our arduous Mental Kombat circuit. Guy Pearce from Sony will be representing Rage Racer, while Nathan Wilson from Ocean is up for the V-Rally team. On your marks...

Name: Nathan Wilson Age: 26 Job: PR Executive with Ocean Favourite games: Cheeky chappy Nathan is a footie fan and plays a mean game of ISS Pro. He's not bad at Tekken 2 either, but this month he's behind the wheel answering questions for team V-Rally.

Name: Guy Pearce Age: 23 Job: PR Executive with SCEE Favourite games: Fly Guy is a fast lad into his cars, which is lucky as Ridge Racer Revolution and Rapid Racer are always at his disposal. This month Guy will be representing the Rage Racer team

QUESTIONS	NATHAN		GUY	
1. Which Actua games will Gremlin be releasing this Autumn?	Soccer 2, Tennis, Relations and Spit-throwing.	2/4	Soccer 2, Tennis, Ice Hockey and Golf	4/4
2. What is the name of the company set up by ex-Rare programmers?	Eighth Wonder (But unfortunately no Patsy)	1/1	Eighth Wonder	1/1
3. What is the name of PaRappa The Rapper's girlfriend?	Sunny Funny	1/1	Sunny Funny	1/1
4. Who is currently producing Rascal and Psybadek?	I know this, but my memory has gone after last night's PC Gamer party	0/1	Psygnosis	1/1
5. Which American company developed Spider?.	Boss Studios	1/1	Boss Studios	1/1
6. Name two games on the Atari Arcade Classics collection.	Missile Command and Centipede	2/2	Asteroids and Missile Command	2/2
7. Of what genre is Psychic Force?	Beat 'em up	1/1	Beat 'em up	1/1
8. Name three Ocean PlayStation games.	Worms, True Pinball and V-Rally	3/3	Worms, V-Rally and Tunnel B1	3/3
9. Name three titles from Sony's in-house development team.	Cool Boarders, Porsche Challenge and Total NBA '97	2/3	Total NBA '97, Porsche Challenge and Rapid Racer	3/3
10. What's better: Rage Racer or V-Rally?	It's got to be V-Rally. No problem.	1/1	Rage Racer, obviously.	1/1
VERDICT	14 – Great scoring by the Manchester lad, possibly the highest we've ever had.		18 – Clinical. No messing, just a complete round with no faults. Respect is due.	

QuizStation

The questions

1) How many tracks in Rage Racer?
2) How many tracks in V-Rally?
3) Who was the main driver in Bullit?
4) Tracy Chapman sang about a fast what?
5) Name two stars in Fast Times at Ridgemont High?
6) What's the world 100m record?

dos are announcing financial results this morning and the corporate press have all asked for exclusive photographs, so I'm off to see my costume designer, Antonia Davis, for a few final adjustments. I arrive at Antonia's studio around 10.30 after a hectic half-hour journey across London.

Antonia has designed some really cool outfits for pop stars, including Tina Turner. She's got my new get-up ready and everything's been meticulously tailored to ensure that I look as Lara-like as possible. She's even going to spray the clothes with silicon to recreate the look. Well, everything seems to fit perfectly, and I mean perfectly — talk about skin-tight. I'll need several of these costumes because, unlike the computer Lara, I actually need to change my outfit every day, especially when I'm working at trade shows such as E3.

The shows are great fun and it's such a buzz when you're instantly recognised. Everyone wants to have their picture taken with me so that they can publish it in their magazines. I've heard that PSM will be giving the game big coverage and that they'll be running the very first review when Tomb

Anybody who played the original Tomb Raider will know that guns are vital, and as you can see, Lara has a beautiful pair.

Work, Rest, and PlayStation

Raider 2 is finished, so I'd better make sure I'm extra nice to that Rob Pegley guy if I see him at the shows...

It's 12.30 now and I've just enough time to grab a quick snack before I arrive at Gassworks. This is part of Eidos and I'm here to pose with Charles and Ian for the next hour while the photographer takes shots from every conceivable angle. He also wants to take a few of me by myself for the PR manager to send out to the press. For these shots I have to recreate poses as seen in the game. It's not that easy to imitate Lara Croft as she's so agile and graceful, but I'll try to do my best without laughing. At times it can be quite embarrassing copying a computer-games character, but at least I don't have to wear a some blue hedgehog outfit.

After the photo-shoot I have to drop into Naked Records. They are a wholly-owned subsidiary of Eidos and it was Nick Thorpe, the manager, who actually got me the job as Lara Croft. He introduced me to Charles and I was hired for two reasons — not only do I actually look like Lara, but I sound like her, too. Just goes to show that it's not what you know but who you know... The single has been ongoing for the past few weeks and was partly recorded in the Amazon jungle. Dave Stewart, who's producing the single, insisted that we go there to capture the vibes (or something like that) and I must admit that it was an

Adored by videogames players the world over, Lara Croft has become a household name and has graced the covers of Sunday supplements and *The Face* alike. Now, the polygon Lara has come alive in the shape of Rhona Mitra. We talked to her about life as a PlayStation phenomenon, show-stopper, and about her forthcoming potential pop career.

amazingly beautiful place. I've just got to re-record a couple of vocals for the latest mix this afternoon. The single should be finished in a few weeks, so watch out.

It's 4pm now and I've just had a call to say that Eidos are sending me on a media training course tomorrow. This will equip me with interview skills that will help me to work with the press. There'll be no excuse for me to get tongue-tied when I'm doing TV interviews. I hope I manage to come across as well as the computer Lara — I imagine that she'd be exceptionally cool, calm and witty when in front of the camera. Nothing seems to phase her. But I have had quite a bit of acting experience already, so I should be able to cope with the press and all their questions.

My latest TV role was in Jilly Cooper's The man who made husband's jealous. I played Flora, but I won't tell you too much about it or I'll spoil the surprise! I've also been in The Bill and The Ghost Busters Of East Finchley and have been in theatre productions and films too. Of all the jobs I've done though, this is by far the most taxing and interesting so far
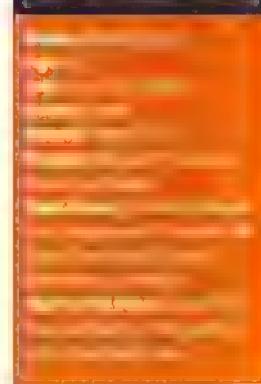
TIGERSHARK ™

"THE ULTIMATE WAR GAME"

2060 AD. The Red menace has resurfaced. The sea boils with submarines
and battlecruisers, blood and oil. Tigershark has been deployed.
A fully-loaded combat subfoil. Built for speed. Dead set on destruction.
Underwater. And over it. Tigershark is ready for destruction and you are
in control. The ultimate war machine. Come hell and high water.
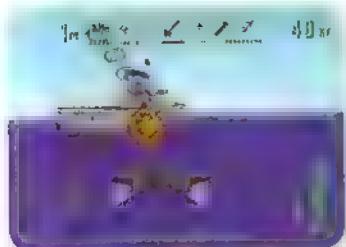
om Killer submarine to deadly hydrofoil

The ultimate war machine.
COME HELL AND HIGH WATER.
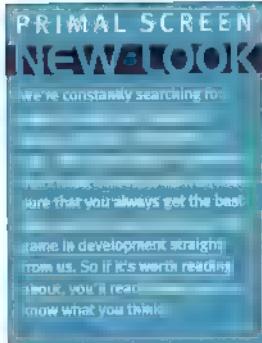
primal screen

The section in which we unveil the games that are new to you. Take a first look at some of the titles coming soon...

Tomb Raider 2

How to make a Lara lolly

(1) There'll be loads of people to shoot. **(2)** Some of the outside levels are bloody marvellous. **(3)** This might look tricky but Lara'll find a way up there.

Style: Action adventure
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Core Design
Release: November '97

Tomb Raider 2 must be the most talked-about and eagerly anticipated game due out for the PlayStation this year. But with everyone clamouring for more details, how could PSM get some inside information that nobody else had? Enter Core Design's PR manager, Susie Hamilton, a tape recorder, a smile and a well-stocked bar. Let's go to work...

Describe your game in 100 words
Tomb Raider 2 is probably the most fulfiling game experience you'l have this year Lara Croft, the ead character (as if you didn't know) has become a superstar in the intervening gap between Tomb Raider and its sequel and you certainly won't be d sappointed with her performance in the new game.

Retaining the classic gamepiay e ements of Tomb Raider, Tomb Raider 2 ncorporates brand new locat ons, stunning graphics w th even more deta l, a smoother contro system and loads

more refinements. You'll almost feel as if you're standing right behind Lara (you'll certainly wish you were once you start playing the game.)

What's going to be the best bit of the game?

Remember the bit in *Tomb Raider* when you're in the Lost Valley? Remember those little raptors? Remember how you wiped the sweat from your brow once you had killed them? Remember how you crapped your pants when their mummy came thundering round the corner all of a sudden? Well, guess what...!

Why will it be better than any other game of its ilk?

At the moment there really isn't anything else like it, so I suppose it stands in a class of its own. No doubt we'll be seeing clones in the near future and it's entirely feasible that they could better the technological side of things. The one thing that any other developer will struggle to achieve is an alternative Lara Croft. And there can really only be one of those ...

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?

Yes, but we can't say too much about that at the moment because a lot of them are still being implemented.

Why should anyone care about your game?

Anyone who is even vaguely interested in videogames should know about either *Tomb Raider* or Lara Croft by now because the media exposure has been phenomenal.

We know from the sheer amount of emails we receive every day that there are thousands of people out there

who care a great deal about *Tomb Raider* and Lara Croft. Some of them are exceptionally enthusiastic... Every day we receive new suggestions for *Tomb Raider 2*, a lot of which we've already implemented.

Tell us a secret about the game you've told no one else.

No – I haven't been told some of the really secret secrets – that way I can't get carried away when I'm out getting pissed up
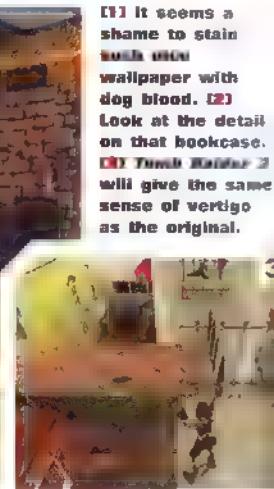
with the press and spill the whole lot

Tell us the plot.

All we can say is that Lara's going to be in search of the 'Dagger of Xian'. She'll start at the Great Wall of China and will subsequently travel to locations such as Venice, Tibet and an underwater shipwreck. The key parts of the plot are portrayed through stunning FMVs but you'll just have to wait for specific details. We don't want to spoil the surprise

What can we expect from the sequel that we didn't get from the original?

Dynamic lighting. Exterior settings. Enhanced Lara Croft. New moves. New clothing. New weaponry. All new enemies. All new levels. Refined game engine. Smoother control system. Secret things.

Any change in the Lara's design/ability?

Yes, she appears much smoother in *Tomb Raider 2* – the pointy bits have now been rounded off very nicely. You'll also see a change in her costume at various points in the game. Underwater combat is achieved with a harpoon gun, so she'll no longer have to swim frantically away from the aquatic beasties.

Other abilities include a hand-over-hand climbing move, up, down and side-to-side. There's also some other secret stuff that we're not going to tell you. So there.
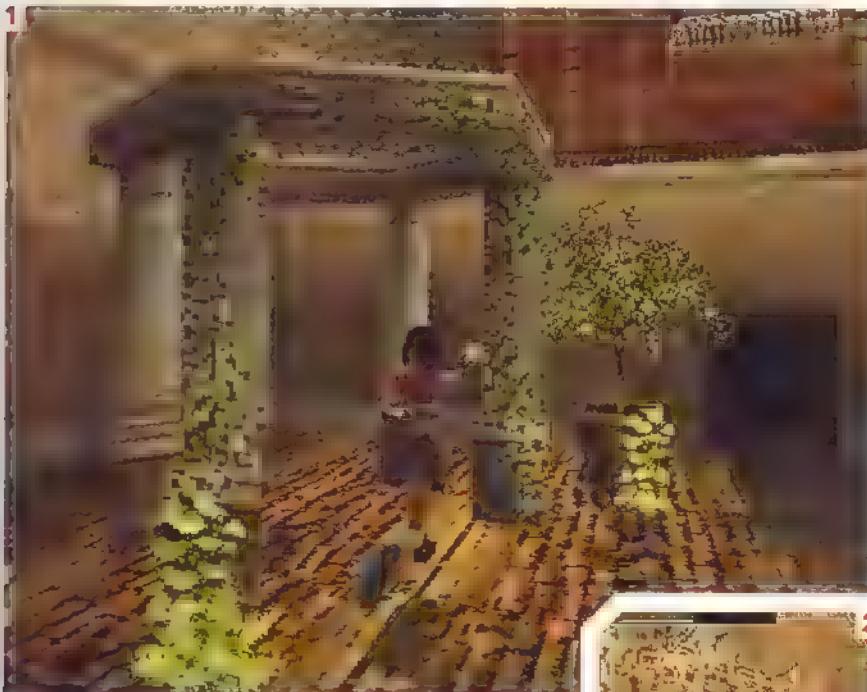
[1] During the game you'll be able to wander a lot further than before, with each level expected to be twice as big as the ones in the first game. [2] Adding to the mythical feel of the original, *Tomb Raider 2* will take the players to far away lands like the Great Wall of China and Tibetan temples.
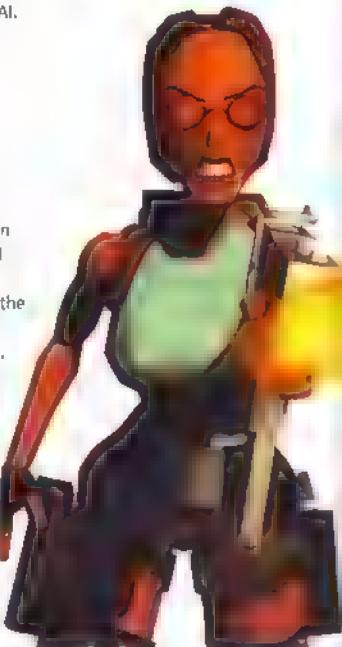
Apocalypse

That's great, it starts with an earthquake...

Some good examples of the cinema-like camera angles used in *Apocalypse*. [1] Here, it's panned back to show the whole of the scene. [2] Here you can see the side-on view. [3] In this grab, the view's been moved to heighten the dramatic impact. [4] And here's the over-the-shoulder view. [5] Is that Bruce, or the player?

Style: Shoot 'em up
Publisher: Activision
Developer: In house
Release date: November

How about a full 3D action shoot 'em up, with Bruce Willis starring as your digi-bud? No problem, say Activision. *Apocalypse* is an all-new shoot 'em up currently in development from a highly respected team working there. The first early screenshots we've seen here at *PSM* have been enough to get us very interested indeed in what looks like becoming one of the PlayStation's groundbreaking titles. So we determined to find out more...

Describe the game in 100 words
Oh, right. *Apocalypse* is a 3D action adventure game with intelligent camera angles set in a techno-gothic future. Basically it's a frantic shoot 'em up in which you gun down legions of enemies in your quest to rid the world of evil

genius, The Reverend. Oh, and it's going to be especially great because it's got Bruce Willis that's right, Bruce Willis the movie star - in it as your sidekick, in what will probably be the world's first ever 'buddy' computer game

What's the plot?
Set in a dark future earth where science and religion have become opposing pillars of society, *Apocalypse* thrusts the player and his virtual buddy into a frighteningly chaotic world Fighting side-by-side, the player and his partner must defeat The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse who have been unleashed by an evil madman, known only as The Reverend. This Reverend bloke is the first man to unite science and religion. The Four Horsemen have taken human forms and the player has to track them down through

a series of multi level dark urban environments.

Is there anything in this game that we've never seen in any other?
From the digitised Bruce through to the nanotech weapons, there's loads of new stuff in the game Particularly pleasing, though, is the full range of camera shots and angles that were available to the developers. They say that this should make *Apocalypse* feel and play unlike any other game.

[1] Big bloke, big gun. This'll be a shoot 'em up, then. [2] The sewers level is one of the darkest levels of the game. [3] Bruce often lags behind helping you out when you need it.

[1] A lot of the levels are just at the planning stage at the minute, here's one of the more dramatic stages. [2] A very early Bruce – he's even got the same bald look. [3, 4] When you get to the graveyard you have to try and sneak around gravestones without waking up any zombies 'cause if you do...
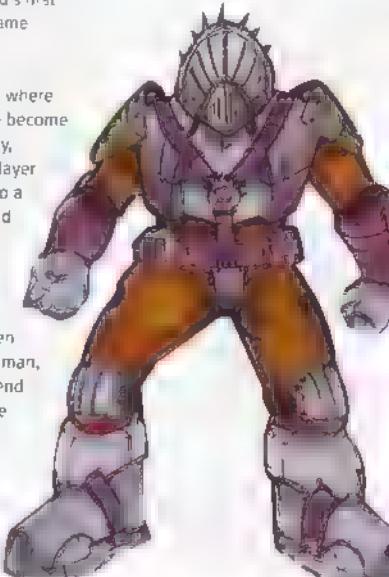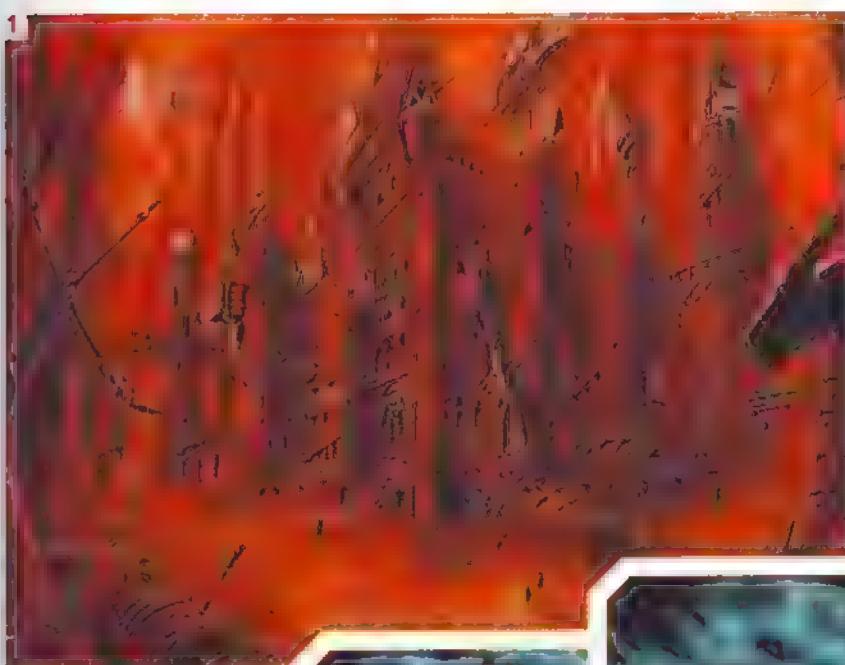
So what other games have influenced Apocalypse?

...m is the obvious starting point. Some of the episodes are ...e Doom-ish, with you looking ...e hero's shoulder, although ... a so s de on and ...d views a bit like there ...esident Evil. The game was ...... from a frustration with ...e Tomb Raider, which ... games for exploring ... but don't really have ... gung ho, tw n uz-style ... on. In fact, one of the ... s biggest influences has ... e films of John Woo ... e designers are trying to ... e the frantic atmosphere of ... , say, The Killer, and ...ng different camera ... classic cinema way in ... to get to what they call based gaming'

Any specific technical innovations?

Oh yes, 'background asynchronous CD loading'. Sounds a mouthful, but actually means quite simply that the game's data is loaded seamlessly off the CD in the background while the game's still p aying. So unlike games such as Resident Evil, where you had to wait while the next scene loaded every time you went to a new p ace, Apocalypse runs continuously. The other really cool thing about this new technique is that it can mean effectively infinite
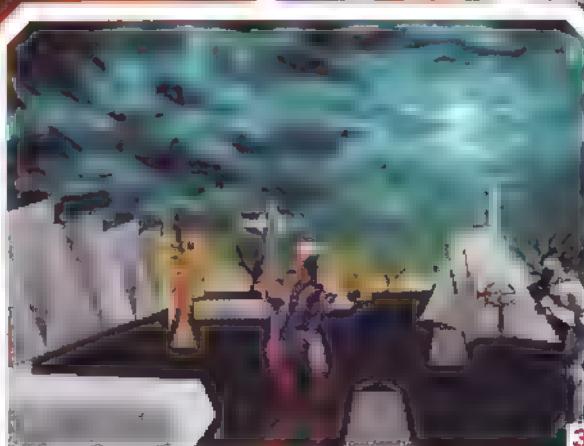
...eve s. In Apocalypse it's being used to make sure that there's as much var ety as possible to the background graphics, so if you're running through a sewer section you're not going to just see the same patterns repeated aga n and again. The game will still pause occasiona. y – when it's loading a complete y new area or one of the

cut scenes, for instance – but it shou d be a b g mprovement on the current technology. And if one group of game deve opers can do t, so can others...

What's going to be the best bit of the game?

Having Bruce as your pal. He's there to he p you out and be your friend This game w l be genuinely l ke a 'buddy' mov e – sort of a computer Lethal Weapon, if you wi l. Bruce isn't just sat there reading orders at you to camera, he exists ins de the game world the same way you do as a 3D polygona character – and he' l react to the environment, too

n addition, there are a few cut scenes where deta s about Bruce's character will come out, he ping you to get to know h m Bruce plays a nanotechnologist, but he's not some kind of stuck-up propel er head scientist. He's a regular guy – he's your back up man and your friend ▶

[1] An early design sheet for the graveyard level. [2] Quite a lot of the action takes place in the open air, in foggy old London Tahn.

primal screen

▶ Why will *Apocalypse* be better than any other game of its ilk?
Erm, Bruce W lis is in it – did we mention that? But seriously, *Apocalypse* is going to be the most frant c, explosive 3D engrossing environment game in the world. It's going to make Lara Croft look like a bit of a wuss and *Resident Evil* look like *Tellytubbies*

What's the pedigree of the team?
Two German Shepherds and a Lhasa Apso. Aha ha ha. No, rea ly though, al the team are veterans.
Probably the best known thing they've been involved in is *MechWarrior 2* The d rector, artists and des gners were all involved in that. But there's also the character des gner from *Pitfall 3D* and a bunch of other peop e who've worked on Activis on tit es as varied as *Zork Nemesis* and *Spycraft*

Why should anyone care about *Apocalypse*?
Have we mentioned Bru... Oh, yes. We l it should be fantast c is why There l. be no other game quite as exc ting

Tell us a secret about the game that no one else knows
John Travolta's definitely not in it.

[1] Bruce pumps his virtual mate full of lead... That last crack about his hair really must have hurt. [2] One of the early aspects of the city level. Here, you'll find yourself jumping from roof-top to roof-top, dodging nasties as you go.
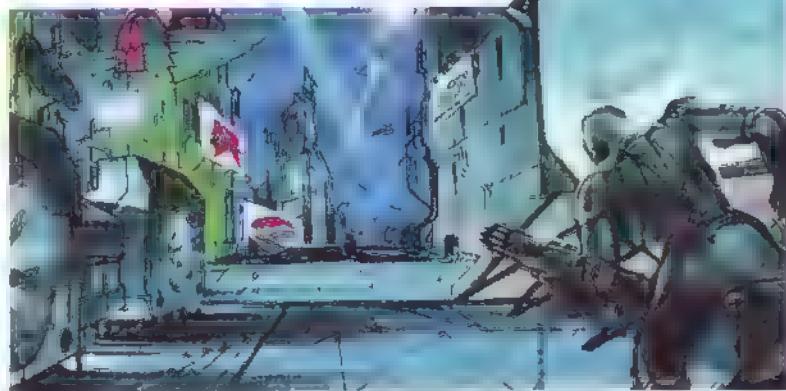
Is Bruce electric?

S o just how do you get the world's biggest action movie star (oh yes he is, he's rumoured to be getting an unprecedented $40 million to appear in *Die Hard 4*) to appear in your game? Tempt him with even more wads of cash, that's how. The multi-million dollar deal that got Bruce to star in *Apocalypse* included Mr Willis taking a substantial number of shares in Activision. Still, in fairness to Bruce, he is an actor that's prepared to take the odd chance with his career. Just take *Pulp Fiction* and *The 5th Element* as two examples – neither movie made him the sort of money that he can expect from another *Die Hard*. But we shouldn't get carried away in our idolisation. He might take the odd

small chance, but Bruce is still very much the Hollywood movie star – when he was filming *The 5th Element* in Britain he had to have donuts flown in all the way over from America because he didn't rate ours.
The process of actually getting h m into *Apocalypse* was quite a lengthy one and involved lots of motion capture work for Bruce. The main part of the process involved cyberscanning him – a process that actually involves creating a 3D laser scan of the actor's face and

then moving it into a 3D graphics program where it can be manipulated and tweaked. On top of that, there was a lot of close-up work involved, as illustrated by the picture here. Bruce's face was covered in a myriad of dots and he would then act his lines. A computer would be watching the reflections of the dots and manipulating the already established virtual Bruce to mimic the real one perfectly. A similar process was then used to capture Bruce in motion and turn his body into a polygonal character, and then all three parts were stuck together inside the computer. The end result? A scarily realistic looking Bruce Willis inside your PlayStation.

They took the real Bruce, then made a rough 3D image of his face. Then, more detail is added to make the virtual Bruce.

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(1) Nikki certainly does have a few more skills to show off. (2) Now that looks hideous. (3) More amazing spirally levels. (4) The game certainly *looks* amazing.

Pandemonium 2

It's a magical mystical tour

Style: 2D/3D platformer

Publisher: BMG interactive

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release date: October '97

With every developer doing their damnedest to copy a certain Italian plumber, it was a refreshing change to hear about Crystal Dynamics' plans to release a traditional platformer. We caught up with marketing manager Jim Curry, and asked him a few questions about the sequel to *Pandemonium*.

Describe your game in 100 words
Hyper-kinetic, psychedelic, techno insanity. It's also an action platform game. Nikki, the tough and sexy spell-slinging sorceress is back, along with Fargus the fool. Fargus is a pyromaniaca, goof-ball partnered with a viper-tongued puppet on a stick turned boomerang named Sid. Together, the terrific trio are out to capture the Comet of Infinite Possibilities from the goons.

Why do a sequel?
Pandemonium gave us the opportunity to learn how we could push the PlayStation, the *Pandemonium* engine, and the camera angles. *Pandemonium 2* will benefit from what we

discovered while making the first product. We had more that we needed to try

What can we expect from the sequel that we didn't get in the original game?
Unique high-speed gameplay, absolutely brilliant, nearly psychedelic graphics, and new game mechanics.

Any change in the character design/abilities?
Yes, we took the adolescent Nikki and turned her into a take-no prisoners adult. In *Pandemonium 2*, Nikki has come of age – now she can cast powerful magic spells while retaining her athletic jumping skills. An older Nikki gives players more skills to utilise. Nikki can now climb, swim, shoot, and edge grab! She's very firm... uh, fresh

Fargus has been updated as

The same clever variation of camera angle is evident in the sequel.

well. He's discovered that Sid can make a wonderful weapon. Now Fargus can employ his stick in the dreaded Sid attack. Sid also has a power-up attack that can explode enemies on contact.

Will there be anything in the game that we haven't seen in any other?
Absolutely. *Pandemonium 2* presents a truly unique (and warped) environment for some outstanding gameplay.

What's going to be the best bit in the game?
My personal favourite section is the level that explores the twisted mind of Fargus.

Why will it be better than any other game of its ilk?
Coz it's fun, fun, fun

(1) They liked using the falling brick in the first game, and very effective it was too. (2) Those textures are rather psychedelic, aren't they?

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?

...o that we're proud of – flying ...d the design tool. F ying – we ...ve a special 'mech level that ...allows the player to control a huge mech. They get to fly about in ...unne.s and fire missiles. The ...sign tool – our designers have ...e abi ity to script most of the ...me They work d rectly with the ...team to bu ld levels. As such, ...oders are free to bu.ld specia features and effects. The too ...npowers the des gners to the ...nt that they can try numerous ...anat ons of a eve until they ...se something truly inspiring ...e design crew has become the ...sionary' element of the team

What's the industry pedigree of the team?

Most of the des gn staff are from *Pandemonium*. At Crysta we believe in growing our own. Zak Krefting, the lead designer, started out in test. He moved from test to design on *Pandemonium*. Now he's

the dr ving force behind *Pandemonium 2*. The other team members are a l sol d gamers.

Why should anyone care about your game?

Why shou d anyone care about fun? Forget about the words. Forget about the gorgeous screenshots you can see here. it's

al about the game It's the kind of game you can play when you're sober or the k nd of game you can pick up and play when you've just come home after the pub closes, Either way, it's fun.

Tell us a secret about the game you've told no one else

Erm. Okay, we're working on some 'special' models of Nikki that might only be ava lable in Europe.

[1] We've had a straw-poll on the magazine and opinion is divided on Nikki's new hairstyle. [2] She can climb as well. [3] Hmm, is it us or is she more like Lara? [4] That old falling trick *again*.

[1] The coders have included all sorts of animation for Joe. Here, he's tying his shoelaces [2] He really *does* look like Bart Simpson-meets-*Planet of the Apes*. [3] The camera can be set to pretty much what you want. [4] Wandering around the crates – surely not the best place for little monkeys.

Joe Blow
Not just your average monkey

[1] A lot of work has gone into Joe's facial expressions. [2] One of the earlier levels, you really ought to get hold of a nose plug. [3] As expected there are loads of nasty zombies in this level.

Style: 3D platformer

Publisher: Telstar

Developer: Abstract

Release date: Late September '97

Originally this first game from former Sensible Software stalwarts Stoo Cambridge and Chris Denman was meant to feature DJ Fresh, the Rappin' Raddish, and promised great things. Then they decided to ditch the raddish for Joe Blow, a monkey. We dropped by their offices in Braintree to have a look at the results and pose them a few questions:

Describe the game in 100 words

Joe Blow is a 3D platform adventure game, played over six unique and challenging lands within Dreamworld. The evil Nightmare King has kidnapped the Queen of Dreams and is holding her hostage. After falling asleep, Joe is drawn physically into Dreamworld, where he has no option but to defeat the Nightmare King, and rescue the Queen of Dreams. Using his amazing 'blowing' power, he freezes any baddies he meets. And there are, of course, various exciting power-ups and cool goodies to help along the way.

Describe the main character

Joe Blow is from a world which is very comparable to our own. In some ways, it's what we could have been like if evolution had kept us in a more monkey-like form. He's your typical 10-year-old – cool trainers, into games, CDs etc, and with an amazing capacity for holding air in his lungs. Hence the reason for him starring in our adventure. Using his power, he can blow air at high speed from his mouth and freeze solid anything that moves within his range. He is also a very energetic young man, which is more than obvious when you see that he runs almost everywhere, except if he's a little cautious where he might walk.

Why did you choose the Joe Blow character?

Well, we actually had a wide range of characters in mind before we uniformly agreed on Joe. To begin with, the game was going to be called *DJ Fresh*, where DJ Fresh was a rappin' rad sh. Looking back, I'm glad we changed to Joe, as he's a pretty spunky little chap.

Is there anything in the game we've never seen in others?

As we're taking full advantage of the PlayStation's capabilities, the system we've incorporated for our 3D models offers a high level of detailed animation without hindering the playability the game, which is very important to Joe Blow.
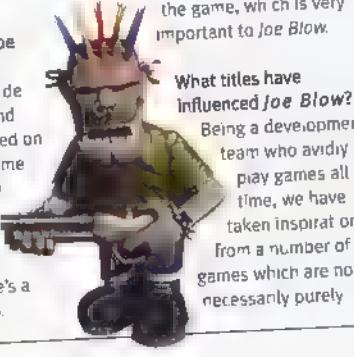
What titles have influenced Joe Blow?

Being a development team who avidly play games all the time, we have taken inspiration from a number of games which are not necessarily purely

platform games. I would say that one of my former projects, Sensible Soccer, gave me great insight into how important a well defined control system is to a game; it's still the most playable football game in my opinion. We always look to be original with our ideas and methods while taking into consideration what people are used to and comfortable with.

Why will it be better then any other game of its ilk?
Joe Blow will have instant playability and a superb control system. The playability will be very apparent to the user very early on, as will the humour that we have injected into it. As players get more advanced, they will see that a great deal of planning has gone on to give Joe Blow incredible depth and variety in the different levels, baddies and puzzles.

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?
We have specifically written our own 3D system (called Coyote) to allow us to create an incredible

gaming experience. We're also very proud of the 3D mode, animation system. The only other innovation is the fact that we've been able to cram all of our ideas and technology into the PlayStation. As I'm sure you know, the machine is very capable, but the real limiting factor is in how much RAM there is to play with. When you think of what we've managed to get into 2Mb, it shows that we don't like taking 'no' for an answer.

Why should anyone care about your game?
We believe everyone will enjoy Joe, regardless of age or sex, as long as they love nothing better than a really playable game. And we think the humour will be appreciated.

[1] There are some really tasteless characters in the disused church. [2, 3] The level editor was designed by an 18-year-old who also designed the game engine. Now there's someone destined for a big future.

Chipper off the old block

When we met Stoo 'Cowboy Boot' Cambridge and Chris 'Music Boy' Denman they kept stressing how they wanted to make a game which would be fun and a little irreverent. To illustrate this, they showed us some of the baddies in Joe Blow. Rather than just pitching another zombie at the player, they had caricatures of themselves drawn, and turned into computer graphics to be used as baddies. They've based the best on an old workmate, Chipper, who attacks by throwing electronic organisers at you before he turns into a huge Tekken 2 Jack-like character.

Overboard!

Take to the high seas

(1) Every so often you can dock at a port and buy supplies for your next campaign. (2) *Overboard!* has a series of very strange enemies to contend with

Style: Shoot 'em up, puzzler
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house
Release date: October

When we first heard rumours of deathmatch galleon battles coming out of the Psygnosis offices we were intrigued, to say the least. We just had to talk to Alan Bunker, producer of the pirates-and-plundering genre-buster *Overboard!*, and find out exactly what the hell was going on:

Describe your game in 100 words

Overboard! is an action game with very prominent puzzle and strategy elements. In addition, there's a smattering of good humour throughout which we hope will appeal to gamers of all ages

The idea is to sail the high seas in your super turbo, enemy-bashing, souped up pirate galleon

Conquering towns and killing foes are crucial to the player's success as he or she discovers hidden treasure maps in the overall quest to locate the hidden gold and goblets of some long-lost, pillaging pirate

It's sometimes fast, often thoughtful and always challenging - 20 levels of damn good fun.

Is there anything in this game that we've never seen in any other?

Drunken octopi, kamikaze fish, killer parrots, exploding baby diplodocuses, numerous weird and wacky enemies in the one-player mode And then there's the multi-player Deathmatch mode in galleons - where have you ever seen that before?

What other games have influenced *Overboard!*?

The multi-player Deathmatch mode has some *Quake* influences in the way it's been designed and structured We've also added our own touches - for example, you can preview a Deathmatch stage before starting it so you know you're accessing the one you want. The lack of this feature in *Quake* can sometimes be really irritating, especially for newcomers to the game.

We've often been surprised at how people have linked *Overboard!* with *Mario 64*, in terms of gameplay, with some puzzle elements being closely compared. This wasn't a conscious thing but is something we're not going to grumble about

What's going to be the best bit of the game?

The player ship refits are quite cool - one of them allows you to transform your galleon into an airship. The player has eight weapons to choose from and
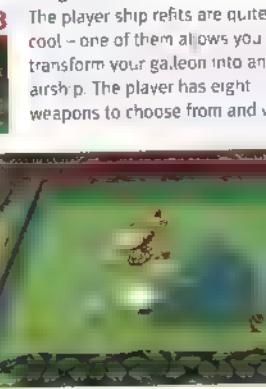
[1] *Overboard!* has a Deathmatch mode which could take over *Doom*'s mantle as best two-player game. [2] A HUGE crocodile. [3] There are plenty of ports to sack whenever you feel like a laugh. [4] Transform your galleon into an airship.

[1] **Overboard!** offers a good selection of weapons. Here's an early flying bomb. [2] At times the battles can get frenetic, not to mention fun.

Ninja 3 and *John Maddens* on the 16-bits, 64-bit Jaguar software and various Psygnosis PlayStation titles. Plus, they're all gamesplayers.

Why should anyone care about your game?
Because we do, and have done throughout the whole development cycle. A passionate, enthusiastic and well-motivated team will always produce something worth looking at.

PlayStation games to follow.

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?
The semi-transparent sea is particularly effective while the reflections and shadows systems a so noteworthy.

Tell us a secret about the game you've told no one else
The game was designed by 1,000 chimpanzees.

...ar y fond of the Oi Sl ck - ...nque, v sual y effective and ...ful in game. And the Genie n deserves a mention for ageous y demonic laugh, ly, the mult -p ayer mode e down a storm in our eva uations, internal y, just about everybody else en and p ayed it

Why will it be better than any other game of its l k?
t's very difficult to categor se *Overboard!*. So I guess the original ty of the tit e is a big plus point. But the balance of act on, puzzle-solving and level of graph ca detail and animation does, we ke to th nk, set a high standard for a l other

What's the pedigree of the team?
I'm g ad you asked that. We happen to have the one and only Dave Jones on the team. What do you mean, 'Who?'. He's the conceptual st and programmer beh nd the legendary *Finders Keepers* ser es of games on the 8-bit machine mach nes. The team a so consists of people beh nd *Last*

Overboard! contains all sorts of weather conditions, so you must contend with storms as well as enemies.

TRASH IT

[1] Puff the Magic Dragon might look nice but he's got a nasty line in fireballs. [2] All the levels look gorgeous. Some are truly stunning. [3] Anything you shoot will return for more in later levels, so we advise that you jump on their heads to dispose of them completely.
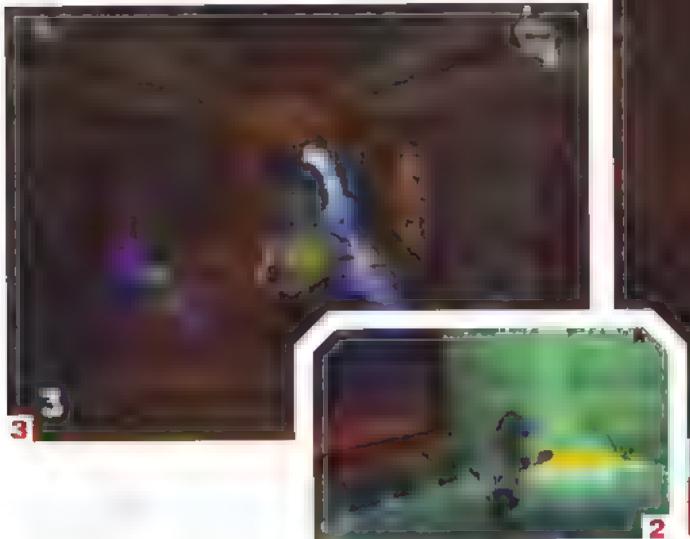
Rascal

Take a journey in the time bubble…

Style: 3D platformer
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Traveller's Tales
Release date: Late September

Since the unveiling of *Mario 64* the whole industry has gone mad looking for a game worth the title of the 'PlayStation *Mario*', treating it like the Lost Ark of the Covenant. With their 3D platform *Rascal*, Psygnosis might well have found it. We quizzed Jim Burton, director of Traveller's Tales, about what could become one of the biggest games of '97:

Describe your game

Rascal is a 3D platform game that combines outstanding graphics and sound with challenging gameplay. The main character, Rascal, is an inexperienced time traveller whose overall mission is to rescue his father from the Evil Time Overlord and return history to normality. To do this, he must find the six segments which together create the time bubble and allow him to pass to the next level. As the adventure unfolds, Rascal will explore seven different zones, each with a past, present and future. Each zone embraces a rich variety of environments, with different obstacles and problems to overcome. The final result is an addictive and hectic game in which every level introduces new enemies and an impressively diverse range of scenery.

Is there anything in this game that we've never seen in any other?

To our knowledge, *Rascal* is unique in that it's the first time environment mapping has been used in a game for the PlayStation.

What other games have influenced *Rascal*?

Our influences have come from a mixture of the best elements of both traditional and new wave 3D platform games.

What's going to be the best bit?

Jmm. There isn't any singular part of the game that can be identified as better than any other. But we do believe that *Rascal* has attempted to achieve a graphically higher standard than previously seen on the PlayStation.

Why will it be better than any other game of its ilk?

We felt that the main characters needed to be really strong and so decided to rely on the experience of Jim Henson's Creature Workshop. They designed the characters of Rascal, The Evil Time

[1] They might not look special now, but the water effects are some of the best we've seen on the PlayStation. [2] Stairs. We've not seen those in a platform game for long time.

During the game be prepared to dispose of many nasties which range from this harmless spider (below) to the huge great Knight in shining armour.

...d and Rascal's father ...cally for the game. There are ...eds of animated characters ...ave been designed in-house ...s of small, quirky creatures ...rk in dark corners. *Rascal* ...oasts some stunning real-...ghting and shading effects ...when combined with ...ng gameplay, make a ...rich and exciting game

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?
Using past experience, we've been able to develop a few special features to enhance the look of the game. For instance, we're running the game at 50 fps in PAL format. This is technically difficult to achieve, but well worth it when you see how it enhances the feel and playability. The lighting is taken directly from *Softimage*, which allows us to produce stunning atmospheric effects. As characters move around the rooms, we alter their lighting in response to their environment, so adding more depth and realism to the models. Finally, we've enhanced the palette depth and shading, giving the graphics a more polished look.

What is the pedigree of the team?
Traveller's Tales have designed, developed and produced several games, including *Mickey's Wild Adventure*, *Puggsy*, *Toy Story* and *Sonic 3D Blast*. The team itself come from a wide range of backgrounds encompassing programming, art, design and animation 2D and 3D

Why should anyone care about your game?
As we've already said, *Rascal* is graphically very strong. Juan Montes made some brave claims about the PlayStation compared to the N64. We hope that *Rascal* will go some way to breaching the gap

Tell us a secret about the game you've told no one else
Rascal will have several secret bonus levels which will be variations on the *Rascal* theme, including an 8-bit retro *Rascal* game and a *Rascal* game of the far future.

[1] In times of trouble Rascal can run like the wind if he doesn't fancy the odds. [2] The lava effect is nearly as impressive as the water.

[1] The graphics in *Fighting Force* are quite something, considering the depth of gameplay. [2] Street fighting. [3] Each character has differing attributes. [4] They could be bouncers.
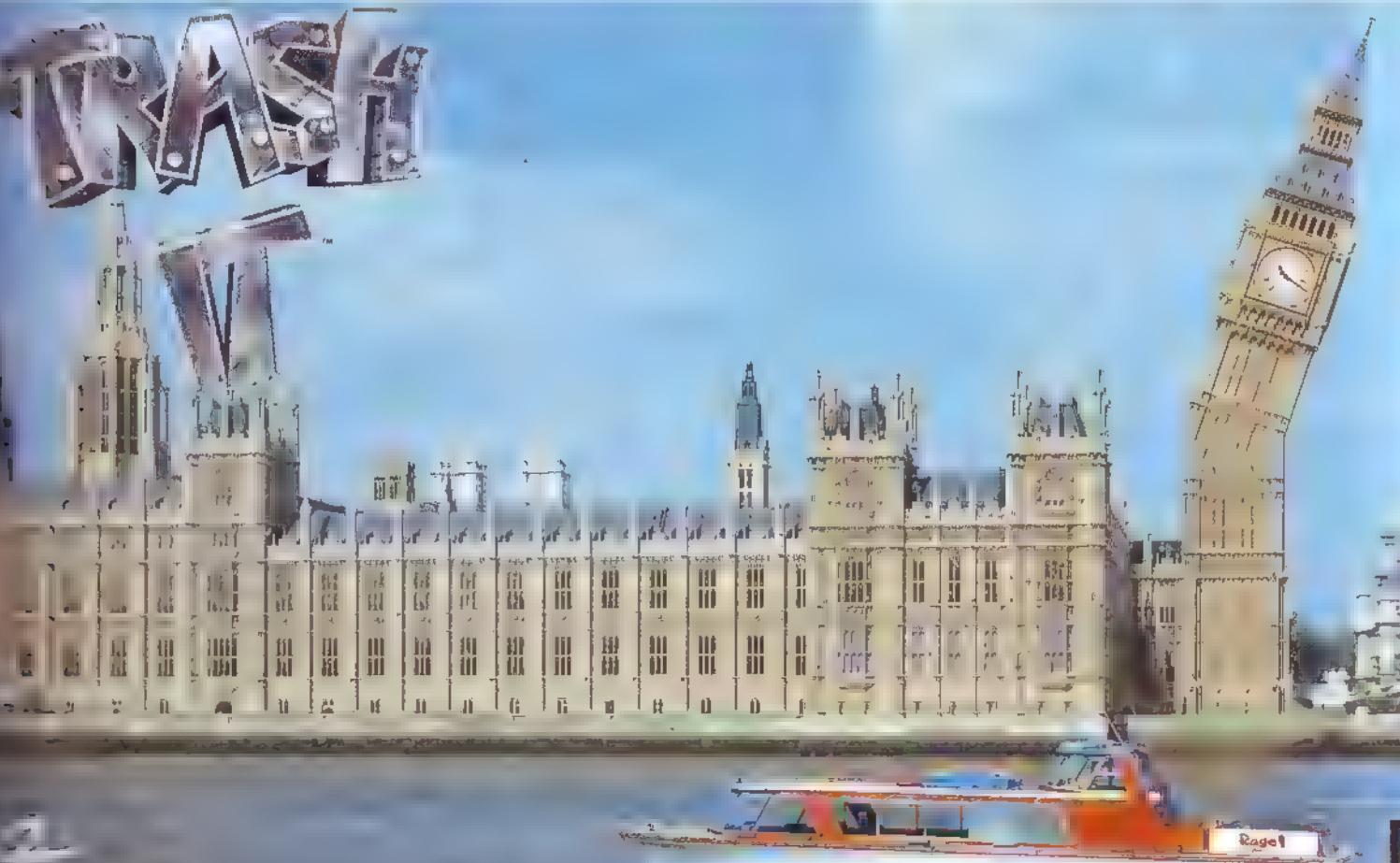
Fighting Force

Get ready for gang warfare

Fighting Force could be described as *Tekken*-meets-*Tomb Raider*. You control four menacing characters who fight their way through a 3D adventure, interacting with scenery and carrying out complex fighting moves.

Style: 3D platformer
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core Design
Release date: Late September
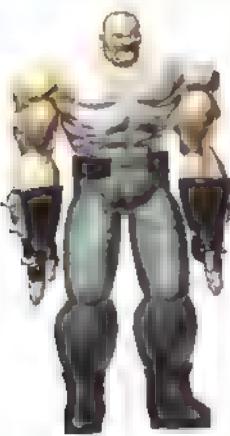
Core Design made their name in the console world with the best PlayStation game of all time, *Tomb Raider*. And although the sequel is looking stunning, developers cannot live by one game alone. Core are sure to be judged by their next release, and the phrase 'Lara-beater' will be used in gay abandon by journalists. Luckily for Core, *Fighting Force* looks to be every bit as ground-breaking as *Tomb Raider* proved to be, with aspects of the gameplay providing technical innovation never previously seen on the PlayStation. We asked Core Design's Suzie Hamilton to tell us just why their latest beat 'em up/ adventure crossover was so special.

Describe your game in 100 words
Fighting Force is an arcade-style interactive 3D fighting game featuring four main characters, Hawk, Mace, Smasher and Alana. It allows the player(s) unparalleled freedom of movement within its seven levels which break down into several stages. Settings for the game are both exterior and interior and there are certain points that present the player(s) with a choice of routes to take – when you play the game again, you'll be able to explore a different route.

Tell us the plot
Mace, Hawk, Smasher and Alana are on a 'mission' to stop the evil Dr Zeng from destroying the world. He's convinced that the world should have ended in the year 2000 and when it didn't, he rather upset. He's hired a lot of brainwashed goons to prevent heroes from hindering his evil plan. The gang first found out about this when one of Dr Zeng
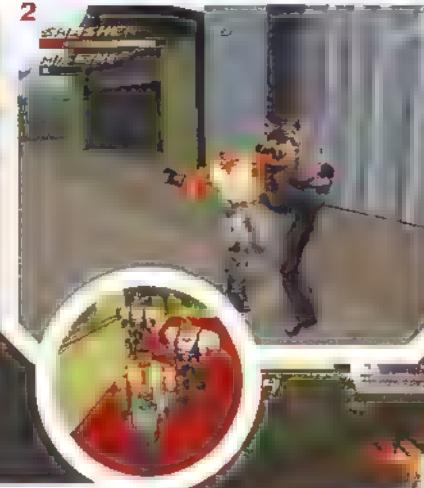
...ass stants let the cat out of the ... what's the chances of that?) ...nother complicated and ...ever but useless p ot

...at's going to be the best ...t of the game?
...e interactive side of ... s really special. ...mp e, walk up to a ... d punch it the ... es off. Punch it ...nd the glass ...Hit it a few more ...es and the bonnet and ... snao open. Now really ... d the wheels fall off ... he car dies. You can then ... the wheels and thrown ... at your adversaries. If ... Smasher' you can ... the engine out of the ...en a few people ... But be careful not to get ... throw ng a few goons ... path of on coming traff c – ... treat. Here's another ... You're in the ft and a ... eons casually walk in and

start to beat the crap out of you. What can you do? Try smashing the glass box to reach the fire axe and then use it to s ash a few people into bits. If that doesn't work say that one of the goons grabs the axe from you try breaking up the ra ling and bash ng a few of them over the head with it. Then smash the glass in the elevator itself and throw them al out. Hear their pitiful screams as they plummet to a squashy death below. Very unpleasant

Why will it be better than any other game of its ilk?
Because *Fighting Force* offers so much more than other fighting games. You've got your basic one- or two-player fighting and exploration, plus the interact on and amusing ways of hurt ng the badd es - a l this in itself makes for a va ue package. But that's not

a l. *Fighting Force* a so has an Arena mode in the style of *Tekken*/*Virtua Fighter* there'll be around seven d fferent arenas in a l. You can bash each other up or you can play against one of the bosses, depending on how far you've progressed through the game. The Arena mode a so features the interactive stuff, too, so you can smash each other to pieces with various glass bottles, iron bars, trash-cans, etc. Each o the characters has around 50 moves, not includ ng the special moves. There are even two-player co operative moves, so you can

rea ly gang up on the baddies together

Any specific technical innovations to speak of?
As wel as hav ng the two ma n characters on screen and loads of background stuff, we've also managed to get four or five baddies on screen at any one time w th no s owdown whatsoever

Tell us a secret about the game you've told no one else
fancy Hawk don't augh because I know you're all drooling over Lara...

Wrecking crew!

... can be quite literally taken apart in *Fighting Force*. One punch will set ... going, another will smash the windows. If you continue punching ... the bonnet will fly off, and eventually the wheels. Once the wheels have ... off, you can then pick them up and use them as weapons by hurling ... at your antagonists. This also occurs with other objects throughout.
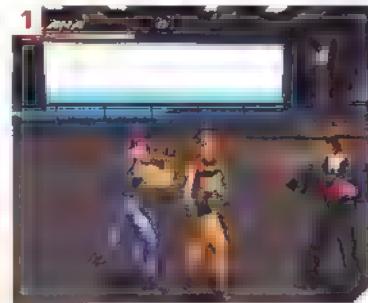
(1) Where would Crash Bandicoot be without his boxes to jump on? (2) As you can see, he can still run out of the screen. (3) Oh, a new bit. The climate has changed since the first game. Shudder. (4) Crash slides towards impending doom.

Crash Bandicoot 2

As mad as a coo

Style: Platform
Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Naughty Dog
Release date: October '97

In the battle for platform game domination, the cute character reigns supreme. Nintendo have Mario, Sega had Sonic, but Sony have... well, nobody really. They tried to establish a mascot-type character early in the PlayStation's life, with Polygon Man the first to fall by the wayside. Later came Crash Bandicoot, but despite the game selling 1.5 million copies worldwide and a huge promotional push from Sony, Crash failed to take his expected place as Sony's icon.

Most recently we've been charmed by the new star on the Tokyo scene – the dog-like PaRappa the Rappa. Featuring in the incredibly popular Simon Says game, PaRappa stands a good chance of becoming Sony's mascot, with more than 500,000 copies of the title sold in Japan alone. Judging by a recent poster advert showing Crash and

PaRappa sat playing a PlayStation, however, it seems Sony are still keen to promote the little coot.

When the original Crash Bandicoot was released, last September, magazines all over the world rated it as one of the best platform games ever, with PSM rating it 9/10 and awarding it a StarPlayer. While initially Crash was seen as the PlayStation equivalent of Mario, it didn't take long for people to realise that it was in fact just a very good 2D game with the occasional 3D touch. This didn't stop it recording incredible sales,

In the first Crash game you got the chance to rid a wild boar. This time you ride a polar bear over the jumping killer whales.
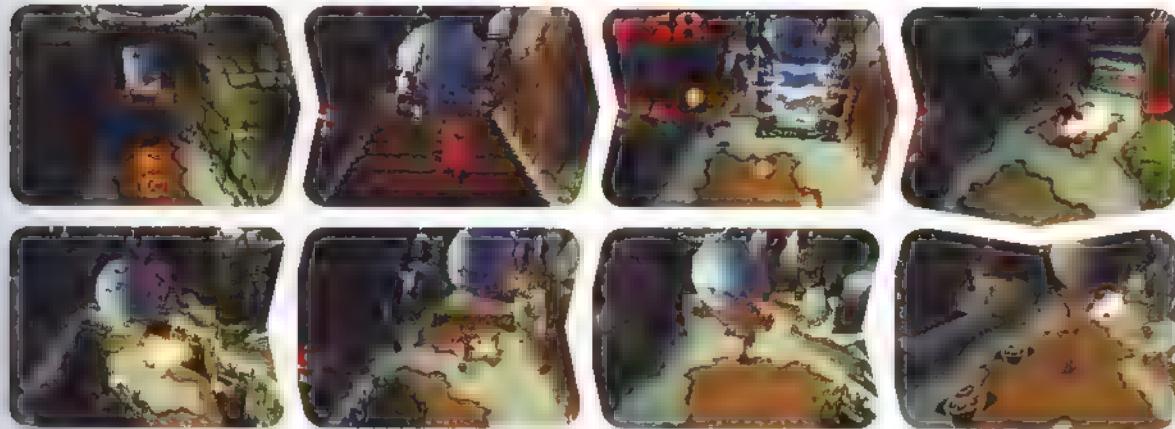
(1) Crash has to avoid some strange mushy creatures. (2) It's those bleedin' boxes aga [3] No doubt the ice will make you slip lik the blocks in the first game. [4] Here Cras takes to the air to avoid the deadly pengu

The boulders are back

Anyone who played the first *Crash Bandicoot* will remember the boulders. Some will remember then fondly as a good test for top gamers, most will only remember them as an incredibly frustrating section of the game. Well, they're back and they're twice as feisty. To make it more difficult, this time the developers have included all sorts of things to avoid as you leg it towards the end. Just some of the nasties to look out for in *Crash 2* will be shifting ...Es, electric fences and exploding flowers.

...ever, and almost a year after ...ase *Crash* is still rated as a ... game by most second... games dealers. ...en it comes to ...ng ... the ...g ...ers

...revising a ...setting round the death of ...main baddy, Dr Neo Cortex. At ...the first game, you may ...er, Crash sent the ...dly Doc plummeting to the ...en he burst his balloon. ...ely the cunning ...ex has avoided the ...formation into street

pizza and has instead fallen into a deep cavern, where he can rebuild his nefarious laboratory and plot his revenge...

Naughty Dog have also revised the level system, after the game proved a tad too linear for many gamesplayers. So now, rather than just ambling through the courses at random, you can decide which level you want to play thanks to the a new device – the Warp Rooms. Each of these rooms has eight exits leading to different levels which can be played in any order – so if one level is particularly frustrating you can go to another level and return to it later

As *Crash 2* is almost double the size of the original, with around 100 levels, Naughty have included some new characters to help you

on your way. Most important of these is little Jo, Crash's younger sister who'll keep popping up throughout the game. En route you'll also encounter some of the nasties from the original game, such as Dr N Brio, Rippa Roo and some less familiar baddies such as N Gin and Komodo Mow.

Almost all reviewers who played the first game agreed on the superlative quality of the graphics. And as you'd expect, the game engine had been improved significantly. Expect even more detailed texture maps, higher resolution graphics and lots of elaborate lighting effects

We asked Naughty Dog's **Jason Rubin** and Andy Gavin to elaborate on the latest developments.

Firstly, why do a sequel?
We had always hoped to create

a multi-game series and we never tired of *Crash* and his world during the development of the first game In addition, during the creation of *Crash 1* we stored away dozens of pages of ideas which we wanted to explore within the *Crash* framework but which we didn't have time to implement. In a way, we were working on *Crash 2* the entire time we were working on *Crash 1*. The final decision to begin work on *Crash 2* development was made in September 1996, shortly after *Crash Bandicoot*'s launch. ▶

[1] Not a nice welcome is it?
[2] The Crash Spin. Not at all like the Tasmanian Devil.
[3] We told him not to mess with the drugs.

Having survived a ...ble from an incredible height, Dr Cortex is not a happy man. Just and till he gets his hands on that ...dicoot, it'll be ...pers all round ...t you watch.

One of the many things Crash can do in the second game is swim. Particularly useful when he gets stuck in some of the water-filled

[1] Crash takes his new boat out for a spin. [2] Looks like Crash has a new slippy-fally-type move. [3] And he hangs - is there no end to what this coot can do? [4] Yet more boxes. [5] We can't work out what's going on.

▶ How will the gameplay differ in *Crash 2* from the original?
There is still a general path to follow but there is significantly more branching out. You can go from in-out gameplay to left-right gameplay within a single round, and the camera has a good deal more freedom. We certainly didn't abandon the track-based system altogether There are compelling reasons to stick with it. For example, when *USA Today* he'd an informal gamesplayer competition between *Mario 64*, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Nights*, five out of seven players picked *Crash* as the best gameplay and the game they would prefer to buy. *USA Today* said 'When fingers hit the joysticks, it was *Crash* they craved'. If we

headed towards *Mario 64* freedom, it's possible we would soon read an article where a path-based game beat us in consumer tests And after all, it's the gameplay that matters

How will the graphics look in *Crash 2?*
We had to redesign the engine so that we would get the same reaction to *Crash 2* as we got with the first game. After all, there have been some incredible looking games released since *Crash's* launch. But we didn't want to abandon the traditional platform gameplay that players have come to associate with *Crash Bandicoot*

Expect the sequel to be a significantly better-looking, better-playing *Crash* with a lot of totally unexpected new gameplay elements thrown in as well things like hanging from ceilings, ice skating, jetpacks, and so on

The first thing the programmers did was to throw out all of the old code. Most of the C code in *Crash* was optimised, rewritten and then converted to *Assembler* The programming staff doubled from two-game engine coders to four. The additional staff has allowed us to get far greater performance from the PlayStation all the code has been rewritten and in many cases the same task is

now many times faster and takes far less memory

What can we expect from the sequel that we didn't get from the original game?
All the art is entirely new. We also have new characters and enemies though some of our favourites from *Crash* will return, albeit with new twists. Crash's animation has been entirely re-done and he'll have more than 10 times the frames of animation. The *Crash 2* engine is wholly redesigned so that it delivers more performance and allows us many new features. The basic gameplay style will remain in place, however - *Crash Bandicoot*'s gameplay was extraordinarily well received by the player. But while we didn't want to abandon the first game's style, at the same time we wanted to give the players something truly new, so we think *Crash Bandicoot 2* will have a good mix.
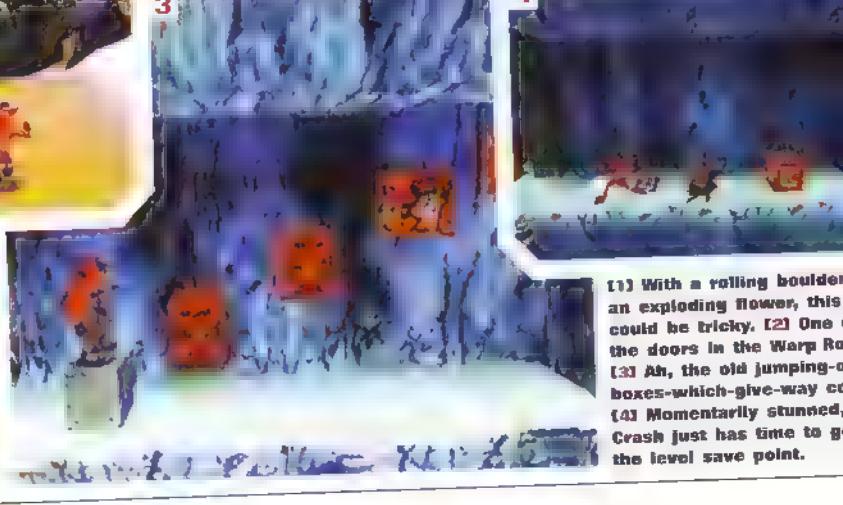

[1] With a rolling boulder an exploding flower, this could be tricky. [2] One o the doors in the Warp Roc [3] Ah, the old jumping-o boxes-which-give-way co [4] Momentarily stunned, Crash just has time to ge the level save point.

Depth

It's a bit deep, man

Suitably complex graphics for an extremely complex game. While the dolphin is made up of attractive polygons, the backgrounds for most of the levels are smart pre-rendered images. It all adds up to a pleasurable and relaxing experience.
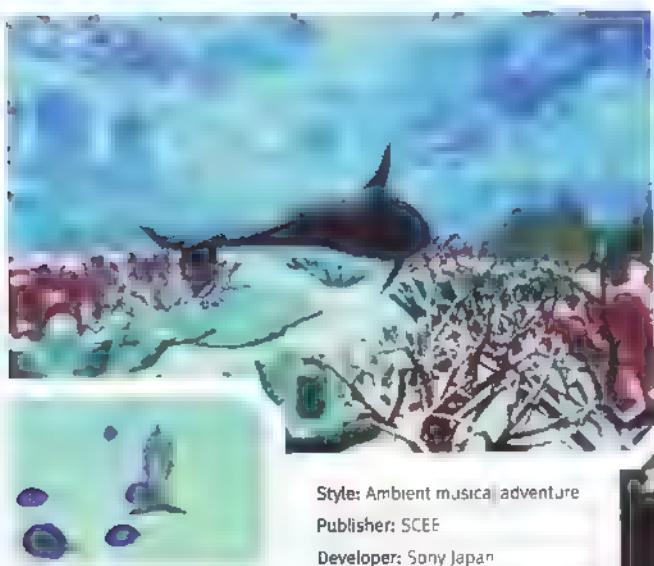
Style: Ambient musical adventure
Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Sony Japan
Release date: January '98

There is already a huge wealth of games currently available in the PlayStation marketplace, and third-party publishers are falling over themselves to produce the next big racing game, the next big beat 'em up, the next *Tomb Raider* and even the next *Mario*-wannabe. With that in mind, Sony have taken it upon themselves to push the boundaries, when it comes to software, and create experiences which add a new dimension to the way the PlayStation is perceived. Their agenda is to create new genres and lead the way in innovative software. *PaRappa The Rapper* is one such example; the 'nurture' style of game will follow soon. Also included in this development bracket is the ambient musical adventure, *Depth*.

Describe the game in 100 words
Depth could be described as 'self satisfaction software' There is no finite end to the game – you just play to create, and to find peace You explore underwater worlds as a dolphin and there are certain areas you can enter which allow you to make music. By altering sequence patterns, BPM modes, top hat and base rhythms, you make your own ambient or techno dance music. Depending on how good this music is, you will proceed to other levels. It's like *Aquanaut's Holiday*, to some extent, but there's far more to achieve and accomplish in *Depth*, and the graphics are far superior

What's the plot? Or have you lost the plot, so to speak?
It's a game without a story or an ending. It's to be played endlessly without victory or defeat

Is there anything in the game that we've never seen in any other?
The ability to create within a real-time environment has been realised for the first time in *Depth*. And the ability to compose music and remix it's implemented for the first time

What other games have influenced *Depth*?
Aquanaut's Holiday was an influence on the game as the people involved with the game had played it in the past, but none of them had worked on *Aquanaut's Holiday* previously Also, some people have said that there's something of *Ecco the Dolphin* in the game.

What's going to be the best bit of the game?
The ability to collect sound patterns and then assemble them, thus creating music

Why should anyone care about the game?
Because it's soothing to play, fun and creative. It takes PlayStation experiences in another direction

The basic idea of the game is to collect different sounds to compose either a soothing ambient track or an up-tempo drum 'n' bass.

Wear your gam

Yes, as the summer season peaks, *PSM* looks at the T-shirts currently in vogue among the games develop
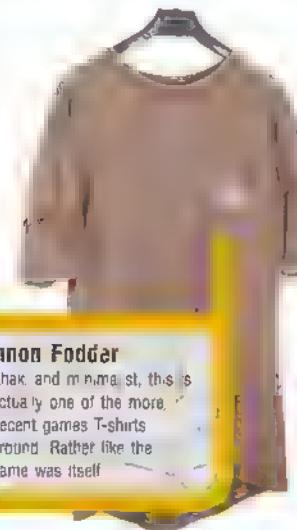
Cannon Fodder
Khaki and minimalist, this is actually one of the more decent games T-shirts around. Rather like the game was itself

Commodore Format
An early and naive effort for magazine promotion, this is nevertheless looked upon fondly by journalists.

No idea...
Found at the bottom of our art editor's wardrobe, we know it's games-related but we don't know what. Answers on a postcard, please.

Cool Spot
Simple, striking design on classic grey Hanes T-shirt. You can't go wrong. Goes nicely under denim shirts.

Tunnel B1
Also a rarity in the games world, this is actually a designer T-shirt by Red or Dead. A few washes and it'll be like the rest

Mortal Kombat
Game logo. Red on black. Hard-wearing. Hardly fades, can't go wrong. Your basic games T-shirt. And it'll go 15 days without a wash

Superman
They don't make them like this anymore. Mainly because nobody would wear them and a European T-shirt mountain was coming.

Wipeout
The ultimate in games fashion is the *Wipeout* T-shirt with its Designers Republic connections. A real bugger to get hold of

AUG

on your sleeve

Destruction Derby 2

It says 'Watch out I'm dangerous!' It says 'Look at me. I'm colourful.' It says 'I'm a cheapskate and I blag T-shirts rather than buy them'

Obscure game circa 1989

Old-skool in the games world, this is a typical example of the scantily-clad, fighting girl on black background-style shirt

The Incredible Hulk

Black T-shirts used to be _de rigueur_ among the programmers in the industry. Thankfully the craze, like the T-shirts, has faded

WCW & Konami Sports caps

And to, ahem, cap it all, there is also a selection of headwear for the discerning games lover (whose hair is receding)

EA Sports

For the sports casual look around the office match this with ice-white socks and ice-white shorts (with double-cadet stripe)

Hebereke's Popoitto

Cute little characters running below the banner 'Dustin Hoffman'. Anyone who's played the game will know why. Anyone at Future will own one

Virgin

Irony from Virgin, with a post-modern font on long sleeve blue mocking the idea we might be anal. As worn by geeks.
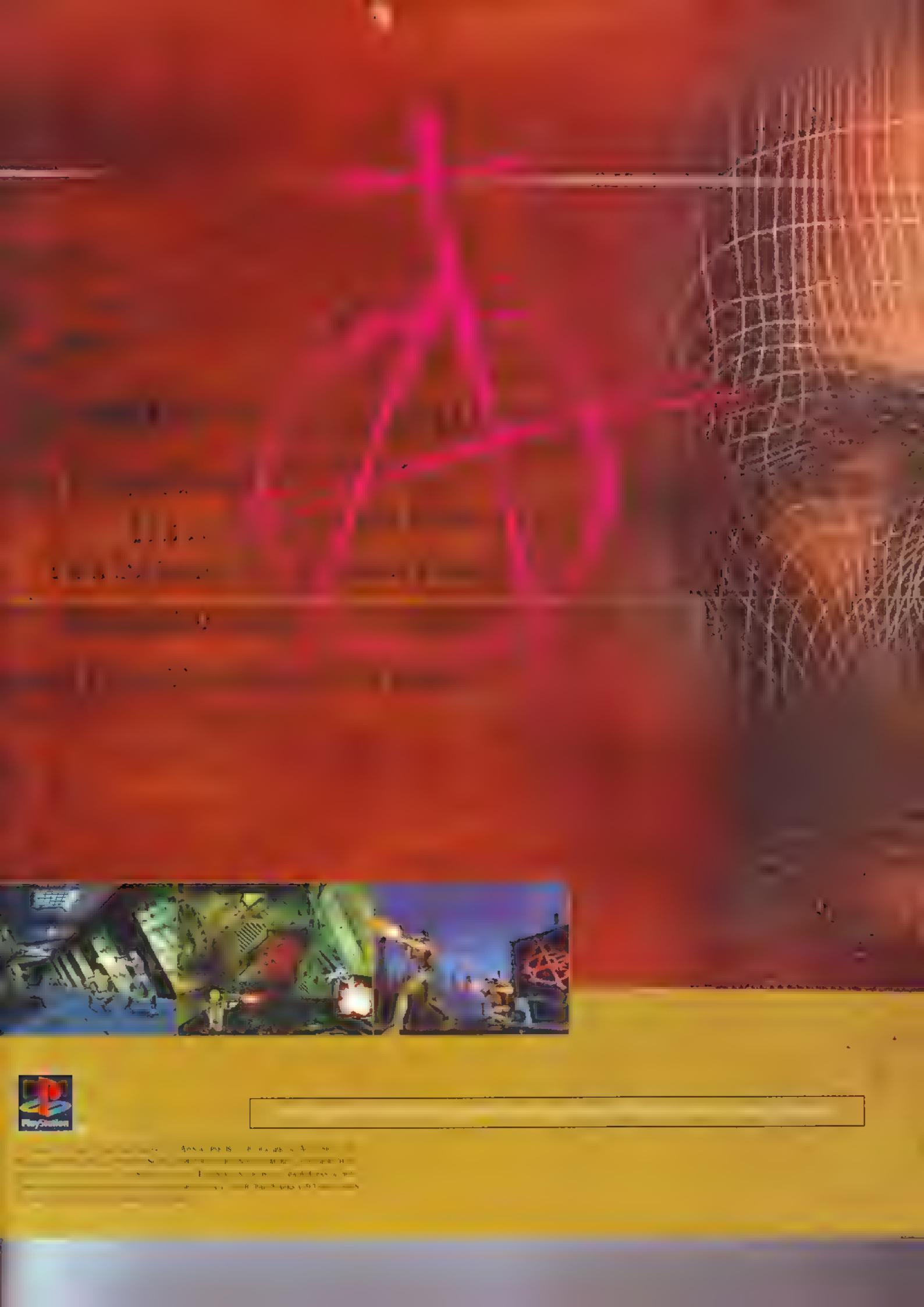
ACTIVIS

Thou shalt kill...

APOCALYPSE

The end begins this Autumn.

feedback

This month, the lack of PlayStation RPGs, an *ISS Pro* backlash and letter from Dave Perry...

Sony puppets?

I genera ly think your magaz ne is really good with a good balance of news, reviews, etc., though one th ng that annoys me is the way in wh ch you seem to be extremely b ased This makes me wonder what requirements are made of you by Sony in being granted perm ss on to use the *Official* title Surely the *Official* means something maybe extra co operation with Sony that other mags don t have It would seem un ikely that Sony would give this right to a mag without getting something in return. This something' seems to man fest tself in constant juven le attacks on N ntendo and Sega and favourab e marks for Sony n house developed games, most recently *Total NBA 97*, *Porsche Challenge* - a 9 and an 8 respectively wh ch should have been an 8 and a 7, *NBA* for the near total confusion of what's going on when all your players are packed in under one net and general poor control, and *Porsche Challenge* for its general lack of variety in tracks and cha lenge

F ck ng through other mags, I see higher marks than yours for non Sony games and lower marks for Sony games and why d you spend half your t me s agg ng off N ntendo and Sega and boast ng P ayStation sales (the Major Players feature n June issue was a prime example) ? I couldn't give a flying f*** for

how many units are sold, how b oody great Sony are what their annual turnover is, or what a egend Ken Kutaragi is I've bought a PlayStation. A l I want to know is what the news is, what's coming out, what's out and how good it is.

As much as you may deny it, the indicators po nt to a semi Sony contro led mag and as much as you'l laugh at this, you can't really expect any other conclusion from the symptoms found in your mag If you real y aren't Sony puppets, then comment about Sony's fa lures (remember the Discman) and how it is regarded in the bus ness wor d, I doubt this wil get printed... though I be ieve you shou d ser ously consider who you are try ng to benefit Sony's bank account or the consumer?

**LD,
Soton**

A ways good to start feedback with a r d cu ous and il informed attack. As ever the only prob em is decid ng where to start, with each po nt more udicrous than the ast et's start with the biased tag and what the *Official* cence means The *Official* part of the magazine means that we pay a sma l percentage of copy sa es to Sony in return for be ng a lowed access to demos for our disc and ins de nformat on on the atest games, We work for Future Pub sh ng, however, and not Sony, and our miss on s basically to sel as many copies of the magazine as possib e, not to boost Sony's coffers (they do qu te well enough on the r own thank you very much) Consumers aren't stupid, they wou dn t buy the magazine f they didn't th nk the magazine was honest in its reviews. And as we sell more cop es than the rest of our competitors put together then we th nk they trust us Other than that, we pr nt whatever we ke and the first Sony see of the magaz ne s when it lands on their desk at the same t me as our subscr bers rece ve it

n terms of marks, if you could g ve me proof that our magazine consistent y g ves higher marks than other people then 'd be astounded. And f you've seen a feature anywhere other than in our

WHAT, NO *KICK OFF2*?

Having just read your super fat June issue, I must vo ce my disappointment at the shoddy exclusion of *Kick Off 2* from the History of Footie Games feature As an av d footba l fan and p ayer myself, I have a ways shown a compulsive nterest in any footba l game that has appeared on the v deogames market. Most of wh ch have been unceremoniously k cked nto touch by my left Predator But truly great soccer games never rea ly date, and although flashier graphics. bigger sprites and more exciting camera ang es may come a ong they are sti l as much fun to go back to now as they were four or five years ago. Hav ng said that, very few soccer titles do actua y fa l into this bracket, but one that very defin te y does is *Kick Off 2*, by Anco, on the Am ga perhaps still the greatest soccer game of al time, definitely the hardest

t rewarded practice sk ll, knowledge of players and adherence to tactics and kept fans nterest al ve by constantly produc ng reasonably nexpens ve scenario and update discs featur ng everything from team tact cs to European compet t on. t was also compatib e with its management off shoot, *Player Manager*, to this day the only management game that real y a lows you to watch the action real st cally out on the pitch and

ensures that ind vidual p ayer A actua y matches the attr butes for which you bought them, Teams bu here cou d then be taken and p aye w th n *Kick Off 2*. The options wer l mitless the gameplay was outstand ng, and you cou d even s your Golden Goals to disk and ente them in compet tions Yet not a mention in your artic e. Yes, the original version of the game appea and is instantly and outrageous y d smissed with the words "in the cr and thrust, it doesn't really do it"

I must assume that the writer this feature e ther A. never rea ly p ayed videogames back in the ear nineties, or B. was simply far too sa to ever get to gr ps w th the pass ng and dribbl ng sk lls required by th s classic soccer t tle A yel ow card s order 'm afraid

**Dave Perry
The *Kick Off 2* Admiration Society
dave.thq@ndirect.co.uk
Official Homepage
http://www.paragon.co.uk/games
mal**

Games an mal you might be Dave, you can't be ser ous about *Kick Off* and its p ace in the annals of footb v deogame h story? ive n the now There are no retro footie games n existence comparable with the one currently grac ng the PlayStat on O *ISS 64* on the N64 and *Sens b e Soc* wh ch is sti l regarded as one of the greatest footba l games of a l time threaten to break its dom nat on

Am ga schm ga, can you real y bothered to load 73 floppy discs ju to see a couple of sprites k cking a between each other? We th nk not Thanks for your views Dave, even they are qu te obv ous y outdated a based purely on nosta gia

Letters

magazine questioning Sony's quality-control abilities then show me it. And when I say proof of marks, I mean a detailed study of averages, I don't mean a quick flick through some tawdry competitor of ours comparing the odd game here and there, which is what you appear to have done in criticising our marks for *Porsche Challenge* and *Total NBA '97*. The fact you think they were wrongly marked bothers us not one little bit, as we assume that you haven't seen every PlayStation game on sale in the UK and haven't played the games in as much depth as us.

As for being semi-Sony controlled, what absolute tosh. Sales of our magazine dictate we can cover things without any need for bias whatsoever. And in terms of Sony coverage, the most important thing to any games publisher is the cover of a magazine – if you look back through our back issues you'll see that until *Rapid Racer* this month, we'd only run one Sony cover in the last ten issues. Nine of them were third party releases.

Finally, in terms of contents we DO print all the news and we review EVERY game. You're not missing out on anything. But you may have noticed we have about 40 pages more than most magazines and so we can cover some other aspects of the industry that our more intelligent readers are interested in. But if you are only interested in linear games coverage, why on earth would you want us to print something on the Sony Discman? What relevance has that to the games industry?

Golden oldies

After being a Mega Drive addict for a few years I finally bought a PlayStation a couple of months ago and have since never looked back. Along with your excellent magazine, a new world has been opened to me. *Tomb Raider, Porsche Challenge, Tekken 2, Actua Golf* and *Resident Evil* are all first-class games.

But a note to all the manufacturers out there, you have many addicts at the other end of the age range. I'm 53 years old and would love to see future presentations like *Spitfire Challenge, Actua Crown Green Bowling* and *Kamikaze 2* to name but three. So come on, get your thinking caps on. I'm sure the younger generations would enjoy them, too.

John Fearnley,
Maltby

Glad to see that you can teach an old dog new tricks, after all, John. It seems that the games being made these days really do appeal to players of all ages. If you're after some games tailored to the older player though, how about *Virtual Knitting, Bus Ride 2097* and, of course, *Supermarket Racer* as well?

Pros and cons

I'm a big fan of the *ISS* series and have followed it since its first incarnation on the SNES and I've got to say how disappointed I was with the *PS Pro* version no player stats, no man to man marking, no real customisation of the team layout that the original *Deluxe*

ROLES OF FORTUNE

I'm writing in reference to Sony Europe's reluctance to release traditional Japanese role playing games. While I appreciate the limited demand for the genre here, I do have a couple of suggestions to help resolve the situation.

If Sony Europe have no plans to release American titles such as *Beyond the Beyond* or *Arc the Lad*, why don't they remove the code which prevents the disc being compatible with European machines? That way I could purchase a copy via an importer and actually play the games I want too. At the end of the day, a division of Sony would sell more copies and role players in Europe would have more choice. Alternatively, Sony Europe could press a limited quantity of already translated RPG's (such as *Wild Arms*) and distribute them via specialist mail order stockists or fan clubs. There may not be any large profits to be made but it would not require much work to arrange and would doubtless improve their profile.

The problem for Sony is that they appear blind and deaf to the demands of role players, in much the same way Nintendo were with the SNES. RPG's, no matter how mediocre, are always cherished by fans, simply because we have been starved of a decent selection for so long. I want to play a PAL compatible version of *Arc the Lad*,
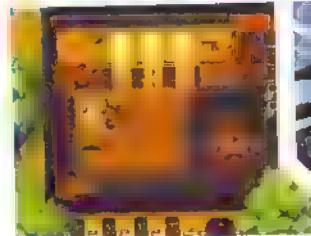
more than *Penny Racers, Grid Run* or *Skeleton Warriors*!

If it were not for Konami distributing their wares in Europe, the situation would be even more desperate. *Vandal-Hearts* is truly a classic game and simply demands purchase by anyone with a brain. I hope you speak to someone at Sony, sympathetic to the needs of the minority market.

Tony
Tony71170@aol.com>

It is a problem, but unfortunately not one that has a simple solution. If it were economically viable for Sony to simply translate code and release the games, then rest assured they would.

Generally though the game has to be an extremely successful RPG elsewhere in the world before they will even consider it. We've found that if people want to play RPGs, then they are usually fanatical enough to buy themselves an imported PlayStation and then buy import games, either in addition to their PAL PlayStation or instead of. By printing letters we bring the problem to Sony's attention, but other than that our hands are tied.

Where are all the RPGs, asks Tony (above)?

version it had. Yeah, it probably is still the best footie sim on the PS but the gameplay isn't up to the original 16 bit version (go on, I dare you!) I think Konami knew this and that's why they did a PS *Deluxe* conversion. This ties in with your 'State of the Station debate' and the general levels of 32 bit gaming quality which begs the question, why did we not get the PS *Deluxe* engine with PS *Pro* graphics? Was it technical limitations or perhaps Konami have left the door open for a PS *Pro II* incorporating these 'new' old features to earn more money (aka *sequalitis ripusoffus*)?

Secondly, a compendium of games reviews would be good every four or five issues. I've got most of the your issues but can never remember what game is in which issue. Lastly, what ever happened to your 'This time last year' review section? That was one of the things I used to eagerly look forward to.

Peter Krishnan
Peter.Krishnan@pcmaileu.euro.ml.com

It took a while to convince us, but we're now very much in the *ISS Pro* camp. Granted, *Deluxe* is a great game, but it was probably only released by Konami to keep *ISS* fans happy until an updated version came out. The game's engine is certainly different to the original, but we'd argue it's superior, rather than being compromised by the graphics.

A compendium of game reviews isn't a bad idea, but surely just buying every issue of the magazine is better?! We'll give it due consideration though.

Finally, although you may have been a fan of the *Replay* section, unfortunately you were in a minority and so we were forced to drop the section. If it turns out that enough of you out there were fans of the section though, we'd be happy to reconsider our decision.

Need better reviews

It's not often I feel compelled to put pen to paper, but after reading your review of *Need For Speed II*, I feel more than just fied. I, and I'm sure the majority of your readers, buy your magazine hoping to find detailed, unbiased reviews of new games which explain all the features the game may have, and in the case of a sequel, the ways it may differ from its predecessor.

Instead we have a hastily thrown together article that isn't just lacking in depth and direct on but is also factually incorrect. If you'd bothered to read the manual, or spend any time playing the game, you would surely have noticed that the two-player, split-screen option is present after all, contrary to what you state. It would also appear that your biggest fault with the game is that there are sparks present, no matter what you are scraping against – well, it's hardly earth shattering stuff is it? I accept you may not like the game but at the very least you could have explained the new features and improvements that it contains, such as the ability to adjust the downforce on the car, the fact that you can stray off the track in numerous places, the different road surfaces, the smoke effects etc.

You also state that the cars have atrocious handling, okay so maybe it isn't to your taste, but it is certainly a very realistic simulation of actual vehicle handling and ultimately more satisfying than games such as *Rage Racer*, which is so lacking in simulated vehicle physics that you may as well be flying a space ship! It is open to debate whether *Rage Racer* is the better racing game, however *Need For Speed II* is undoubtedly the better driving simulator.

Mark Barron
Stratford Upon Avon

This is one where we just have to hold our hands up and say we got it wrong I'm afraid. Both in terms of how the review was written and with regard to the two-player mistake. It was a game that was taken home by the writer and played out of the office due to time restrictions on the magazine and so a consensus view was not taken, something that we try to adhere to on all reviews. The writer was a trusted freelancer and one with a long history in the industry. Needless to say, the writer's history with us as a freelance was terminated when we started to receive letters from disgruntled readers.

With regard to the attempt at *Top Gear* humour, perhaps that should have given us an indication of what to expect.

How the two-player option was not reported on, we have no idea. Rest assured no other 'concept reviews' will slip through the net. Many apologies all round for this one.

Having said that, with a copy of the game now in the office, we still aren't keen on the game, but accept that a five may have been a little harsh. It would only have warranted a six, however, and would not be a game we'd recommend particularly with the likes of *V-Rally* and *Rage Racer* available in the shops now.

Letters

When will the rally games *Total Drivin'* and *Grand Champions Rally* be coming out? These were mentioned several issues back but there has been no sign of them yet

**Jason Andrews,
New Zealand
Andrews@wrong.org.nz**

Total Drivin' is due out in September of this year – for more details, check out our *Made in the UK* feature starting on page 88. As for the other game you mention, 'Champions Rally' is being published by Squaresoft

● Is there any more news on *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake* & *Turok*?
❷ Are there going be any conversions of *The Chaos Engine* or its sequel *TCE 2*?
❸ Is there going to be a PlayStation version of *Bomberman*?
❹ Are there any decent platformers due for release this year?
● Any chance of a PlayStation version of *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*?
❻ Which would you recommend *Rage Racer*, *Rally Cross* or *V-Rally*?
❼ Which would you recommend, the official Sony joypad and memory card or the

Blaze range of joypads and memory cards feature in PSM17?
❽ Which would you recommend, the official Sony RF unit or the Blaze counterpart?

The Bloke from *Doom*

● All three are still in production, with *Duke Nukem 3D* due out this Autumn and the other two set to follow early next year
❷ Unfortunately not. Both were great games
❸ Same story I'm afraid
❹ Ah, now here we can help you *Pandemonium 2* looks fantastic and can be seen on page 36. *Crash 2* is also on the way (this time turn to page 46), and *Gex 2*, *Croc* and *Rayman 2* are also coming out soon. The original *Rayman* is also out now in the Platinum range for £20
❺ No. Definitely not. And, indeed, why would you want one?
❻ *Rage Racer*, followed by *V-Rally*, followed by *Rally Cross*, in that order. Unless you've already got *Ridge Racer Revolution* and fancy a complete change
❼ I'd recommend sticking with official Sony stuff to be safe, but the Fire stuff is pretty cool too
❽ See above

● s the Gamester steering wheel any good?
● Can you do a feature on the compatibility of hardware peripherals to clarify which add-ons work with which games?

**Paul Worsley
Middlesex**

● It's not great, to be honest. There's a smart steering wheel coming out from Interact in the next couple of months though which looks great. We'll have more details on that soon
● We may well coincide such a feature with the release of said wheel

● Are there any plans for *Might And Magic* to be released on the PlayStation?
● What's the difference between a negcon controller and normal controller?

**Andrew and Martyn Bewick
Sleaford**

● Never heard of it mate. And we've heard of quite a few games
● The negCon is split in the centre and each half can be twisted against the other to give the effect of a steering wheel. You use this rather than pushing the left and right button on the normal pad. Its great with racing games, especially *Rage Racer* and *V-Rally*

● Will *V-Rally* and *Rally Cross* be compatible with the new analogue pad?
● How about printing those instructions for the DIY driving set up?
❷ How about a review of the different carry cases available for the PS?

**Usman Anwar
Glasgow**

● They both should be. The negCon is basically an analogue pad, so the new pad should apply in the same way
● Buy a car seat, get a PlayStation compatible steering wheel and then use a bit of common sense as to what you do next
❷ How about it? Are they really that interesting? It may warrant a small boxout in a peripherals feature, but no more than that

● Are there any games on the PlayStation like *Double Dragon*

or *Streets of Rage*?
● Are the spectacular crashes in *F1 '97* only in the arcade mode?
❷ Will the computer controlled cars retire if damaged or will they just continually pit as in the first *F1*?

**Mathew Silva
Hertford**

● *Fighting Force* will take the genre in a new direction, but the days of 2D strolling beat 'em ups are hopefully gone forever. Possibly somebody will do *Streets of Rage* on a retro disc 10 years from now on PlayStation 5 but that's about it
● No, they happen all over the shop
❷ They retire if damaged in *F1 '97*

● Is there an infinite money cheat for *Command and Conquer*?
● Are there any decent cheats for MMV3?
❷ Will we see a *Twisted Metal World Tour* on a demo disk?
❸ In answer to Chris Kerr's request in Q&A about *Alien Trilogy* (PSM20), type in GOTPINK8C1DBOOTSON on the password screen

**C J Dobson
Tewkesbury**

● Yes there is, but this isn't a tips page!
● See above
❷ It is a possibility, but it has lost something of its timeliness now. It may well happen on a demo disc with *Essential PlayStation* though
❸ Thank you, on behalf of Chris Kerr

● Are there anymore RPGs on the UK market other than *Suikoden*, *Kings Field* and *Legacy of Kain*?
● Can you circle your opponent in *Soul Blade* like you can in *Toshinden*?
❷ Are there any plans to release *Secret Of Mana* on the PlayStation?

**Fay Burham
Leicestershire**

● *Vandal-Hearts* is another superb RPG whilst *Final Fantasy VII* will blow your mind when it is released later in the year
● You can indeed

❷ No, its far too old but *Final Fantasy Tactics* is going to come out.

Could you print a list of games which are linkable? Have only found *Doom*, *Final Doom*, *DD*, *Wipeout* and *F1*

**Paul Wood
Ackwood**

Also linkable are *Descent II*, *Krazy Ivan*, *Assault Rigs*, *Wipeout 2097* and *Ridge Racer*

Vandal-Hearts is another superb RPG, while Final Fantasy VII will blow your mind when it is released...

Revolution. In other words, not enough

Will Rugby League be making an appearance on the PlayStation?

**Wes Lewis
Wigan**

We'd be surprised if it did. *Jonah Lomu Rugby* is likely to be the only rugby game to surface

TIME CRISIS
+ Guncon
タイムクライシス＋ガンコン

I have been informed that, at a recent PlayStation trades expo, the only European copy of *Time Crisis* went for a fairly permanent walk with Mr Lightfingers. Is this a horrid case of industrial espionage, or a cleverly-staged piece of advertising by Namco? If, sadly, it's the former, what will this do to the release date for the game?

**Patrick S Cowan,
Edinburgh**

I'd say that's a terrible rumour with absolutely no foundation. We've seen a copy in the office and I'm sure there are others out there in UK PlayStation land

Wipeout 2097 is one of a handful of games that is both linkable and benefits from the negCon controller. Sadly it is currently very much in the minority.

exhumed

I AM THE WALKING DEAD
UNVEILED I HUNT THEE
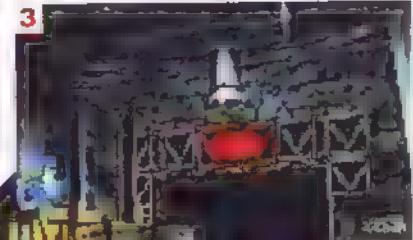COME FORTH, BOYS DOWN
I AM STRONG, I AM STRONG

a b llet in the head

Tekken, *Ridge Racer,* **Tekken 2,** *Soul Blade...* **And now Namco's programmers** are busy converting **another of their arcade smash hits** to the PlayStation. **Do they ever sleep?**

[1, 2, 3, 4] Fans of the arcade original will notice the lower detail on the PlayStation version – but it moves incredibly smoothly.

The arcade machine in all its glory – coming soon to a living room near you. Well, almost.

Time Crisis was Namco's answer to Segas *Virtua Cop* series of arcade 'gun-games' and what an answer it proved to be. As well as super-smooth highly detailed and fluidly animated graphics, the game boasted numerous innovations that lifted it above the competition and guaranteed its massive success

First among these was the lightgun itself, the most advanced ever produced as well as being six times more accurate than its competitors, Namco's gun even 'kicked' when fired, simulating recoil. Perhaps the most unique feature, though, was

the addition of a foot-pedal controller. Stepping on the pedal popped you up to fire at the enemy, while releasing it ducked behind the nearest cover to reload – but you only had a limited amount of time to clear each area of bad guys, so you couldn't stay hidden for long

Like so many great ideas the foot pedal was a very simple one

> Although the graphics are less detailed than in the arcade game... even this early version of *Time Crisis* moves with incredible speed and smoothness

(1) Helicopters are just one of the things you have to keep an eye out for. (2) All gun games have mad baddies who run straight at you... (3) In Time Attack mode you don't have to worry about things like lives.

(4, 5, 6) Three shots of the new level that's been specially designed for the PlayStation version of *Time Crisis*, most of which is set in a posh hotel that's been overrun by some new boss characters and a large number of mooks.
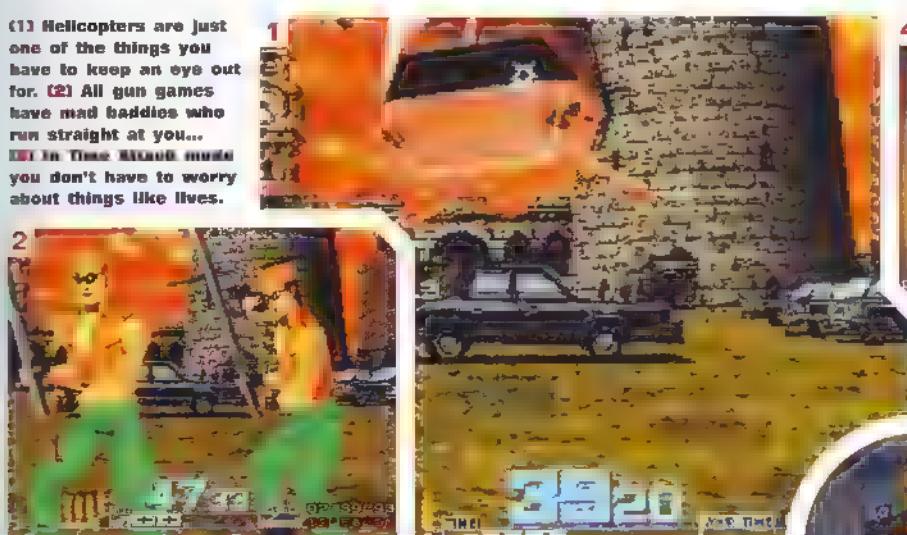
but at a stroke gave the player significantly more control over the action than in other gun games, and in combination with the time limit, added immeasurably to the gameplay Throw in some very clever and imaginative level designs and a smattering of cinematic cut scenes, and Namco were certainly on to a winner

In fact, the only down side to *Time Crisis* was that it was based on Namco's System 22 board, seemingly crushing the hopes of a PlayStation conversion – after all, Sony's grey box is based on the less advanced System 11, and there's no way they could get the game to work on that, was there?

Luckily for us Namco's coders seem to have a very limited understanding of words like 'impossible' – and so *Time Crisis* is now on its way to the PlayStation

As with the original arcade game, the PlayStation version of *Time Crisis* will cast you as Richard Miller, a special agent on a mission to rescue the president's daughter, Rachel, from the clutches of the evil Sherudo Caro and his equally nasty gang of henchmen. In true heroic fashion, you have broken into Caro's base, and must fight your way through the seemingly endless supply of heavy ▶

Guns, guns, guns

Obviously, a gun-game isn't going to be much fun without a gun, but those clever chaps at Namco think of everything – *Time Crisis* will be sold bundled with the new GunCon controller, which has been specially designed for the game.

Based on the much-trumpeted lightgun developed for the arcade machine, Namco claim that the

GunCon will put paid to all the accuracy problems that have plagued previous designs (anyone who's played *Die Hard Trilogy* will understand how frustrating these can be). By attaching to the AV port of the PlayStation as well as the joypad port, the GunCon can check the signal it gets from the TV with the signal being produced by the machine, allowing for incredible accuracy – Namco say that the gun will

be able to distinguish between individual pixels on the screen.

As well as the all-important trigger, the GunCon will also feature two buttons mounted on either side of the chunky barrel. One of these will be used to select options, and the other takes the place of the arcade machine's foot-pedal, allowing you to duck behind cover and reload with a simple push. Unfortunately, though, the GunCon won't feature the 'recoil' mechanism of the arcade version.

Time Crisis is being specifically designed to make the most of the GunCon. Although this means that it won't work with any other lightgun, Namco are already planning at least one other game which will use the controller, and it's likely that other publishers will support it in their games – Namco's previous controller, the analogue NegCon, has become a standard for all racing games, and the GunCon seems likely to follow suit for shooting games.
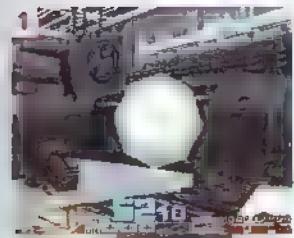
[1, 2, 3] One of the greatest things about *Time Crisis* is the amount of stuff in the background that can be shot to bits, often with spectacular results like these. If the GunCon is as accurate as Namco claim, picking off the odd exploding oil drum will be no problem.

Extra life!

If you can't wait for *Time Crisis* to arrive on the PlayStation, and you're on the way to your local arcade to check out it out for yourself, here's a handy tip – if you manage to hit with 10 shots in a row, a 'life mark' will appear just to the right of the time remaining. If you can manage another 30 shots without missing, you'll earn an extra life.

▶ armed mooks, with only your trusty pistol for company

Likewise, the PlayStation *Time Crisis* will feature both of the original's game modes. In Story mode you must blast your way through a number of stages, each of which is split into areas. To advance to the next area you have to blow large holes in all of the baddies that face you before your time runs out or the baddies blow you to pieces. Time Attack mode on the other hand, lets you choose a stage and attempt to complete it as fast as possible – no worrying about lives or any of that nonsense

As any arcade veterans will have noticed from the screenshots shown here, though the PlayStation *Time Crisis* isn't

going to be a pixel-perfect version of the original   the System 22 board is a lot more advanced than the System 11 used by the PlayStation, after all However, Namco are pulling out all the stops to make the game as good as it possibly can be Although the graphics are a little less detailed and the textures not quite as fine, even the early version of the game moves with

incredible speed and smoothness, and the animation is superb There's also going to be an extra stage featuring new baddies and bosses, and two different routes

Combined with the promised accuracy of the GunCon controller (see 'Guns, guns, guns', page 63) it certainly looks like Namco are going to set a new standard for gun shoot em ups on any console

Making waves

With ideas for track-based racing games rapidly being used up, developers have had to work hard to bring **new ideas** to what is quickly becoming a jaded genre. So far, attempts **have been fairly unspectacular. Sony are about change all that** with *Rapid Racer*

ntil recently the main problem programmers faced with water-based games was getting the water to look convincing in its movements, and the only games with halfway realistic water graphics to date are *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider* Indeed the latter only succeeds largely due to the sensation of swimming it gives

The problem programmers have is devising a graphics engine which can cope with the sheer number of polygons needed to create a realistic water effect Having worked on their engine for two years, Sony's internal team believe they've got the mechanics just about right. We played an early working copy recently and it looks like their time hasn't been wasted – the water looks and feels impressively realistic. It is this replication of a watery environment that will no doubt be the game's main selling point

To find out more about *Rapid Racer's* potential, however, we spoke to **Pascal Jarry**, SCEE's internal development manager, who told us all about the game's development Firstly we asked

him to sum up the game's appeal 'Speed, power, fun and energy! Its the first water based racing title to hit PlayStation and blends arcade action and realistic simulation in one game. Also we've got the game running in hires graphics at a crisp 50 frames per second, the first racing game to achieve this feat. The game will also have unrivalled water simulation and realistic handling dynamics With the new track

One of the many prestigious virtual trophies up for grabs in Rapid Racer.

[1] When we first saw *Rapid Racer* people commented on how it looks just like an arcade game. [2] Each boat leaves a really impressive wake as it goes. [3] The tropical island track. Lush.

'Speed, power, fun and energy... *Rapid Racer* blends arcade action and realistic sim in one game'

1

2

(1) The water effects are fantastic. **(2)** It might not look much in a screenshot but it looks brilliant when it's moving. **(3)** The Grand Canyon level is particularly impressive. **(4)** The tunnel sequence. **(5)** Entering said sequence. **(6)** Expect to be overtaken. **(7)** The Russian course.

7

6

3

5

4

Sony's internal development team.

system you could spend the rest of your life playing the 256,000 tracks! That's 256,000 tracks. Two hundred and fifty-six thousand! Now before you all start writing in, asking how on earth you can have more than 256,000 courses, we'll explain. Once you've completed the normal 18 courses, you are given access to a fractal generator which calculates all sorts of figures and generates a brand new course each time. Pretty impressive stuff. Although whoever has to do a tips guide for that lot will have their work cut out.

When we played *Rapid Racer* for ourselves, the control mechanism seemed to owe a lot to the *Wipeout* games, using the top shoulder buttons as brakes and sliding your way around the courses. Pascal says piloting is as much about beating the water's current as it is beating your opponent in the race. 'Players can smash through waves or get caught up in the wake of an opponent. As the boat's upgraded, it can be rocked slightly to get out of tricky sections, or the foils improved to cut through the water and turn more smoothly and quickly. There are also ideal racing lines to follow by avoiding rough sections of current, and so

on, if the player is aiming for a record score.'

With water being such a difficult surface to replicate, we wondered why they chose it for their game. 'Simple!' exclaims Pascal. 'Because it was a great opportunity to develop a true 3D racing game with all the potential that such an environment offers, although mainly because it was a fresh slant on the genre. We've spent two years working on the code and we're updating it daily.'

Speaking of fresh, we wondered if there was anything else in the game we've never seen in any other game. And of course there was! 'Three points. Firstly, optimised two player/multiplayer modes, rather than the usual cut-down

'Players can smash through the waves, or get caught up in their opponent's wake'

compromise. Secondly, the fractal track generator, and finally the specially composed soundtrack that works like a film score with a central theme adapted for each course rather than the licensed ▶
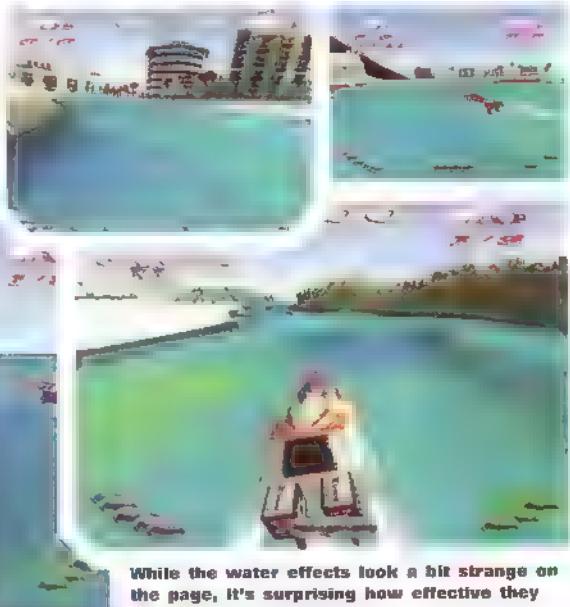
While the water effects look a bit strange on the page, it's surprising how effective they actually are in motion.

[1] A very pointy boat.
[2] The American team, very subtle wouldn't you say? [3] *RR* is not a game for the weak of stomach. [4] Two boats. [5] Even water games have racing lines. [6] Falling rocks are a real danger with the Grand Canyon course. [7] One of the more useless views, it just works. Just.

▶ stuff or guitar 'rawk' that racing games usually have.' After quoting *SCUD Race* and *Wave Race 64* as their influences, Pascal doesn't waste any time explaining why *Rapid Racer* will be better than both of them 'We've captured the dynamics of racing more convincingly than *Wave Race 64*, which is a competent title, but we were disappointed by its two-player mode. *Rapid Racer* has support for up to five players and a plethora of rewarding multi-player modes such as Sudden Death, Winner Stays On and Championship

Other than the gameplay the developers are very proud of the technical innovations they've managed to cram into the game Particularly impressive is the graphics mode running in high res at 50 frames per second Quizzed as to why they used the high-res mode, Pascal says that it was 'because it was impossible t's been hard but the result is worth it'. With the passion Pascal has for the game we could have let him talk about it for the whole issue, but we had to pin him down. One thing he was less willing to talk about were the hidden cheats. We'd heard somewhere in the game there was a special cheat for people

'We've got the game running in hi-res graphics at 50 fps, the first racing game to achieve this feat'

who own *Porsche Challenge*, but Pascal refuses to tell us how it could be accessed. The most he will divulge was that it was 'well worth finding out'

Rapid Racer stands a very good chance of being one of the top games of the year. Whether we can test all 256,000 tracks between now and then is a different matter.

Multi-player mayhem
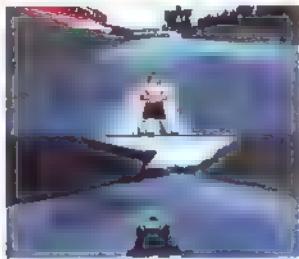
Most racing games nowadays offer a split-screen option to keep the punters happy. Rapid Racer doesn't disappoint, with a really useful system where you can split the screen either vertically or horizontally without any noticeable loss of speed. If you have more than one friend, up to five players can take part in the league or tournament challenges. And what with the 256,000 track variations available there are certainly plenty of tracks to have a go with.

hades' knight

Disney's new blockbuster, *Hercules*, is being developed as a film and a game simultaneously...

As we get into summer, tradition demands that Disney release its new blockbusting film. This year's main event is *Hercules*, the tale of the demi-god titan of Greek mythology.

Being Disney, though, there's scant attention being paid to the traditional tale. In this version, the baby Hercules is kidnapped by Hades' henchmen, Pain and Panic. Hades, lord of The Underworld, has his eye firmly set on taking over from Zeus as top God. Pain and Panic whisk Hercules off to Earth where he is fed a mortal-making formula in an attempt to rescind some of his powers. The young Hercules escapes and vows to make his way in the world as a hero. Which is where you come in.

> The game is mostly a scrolling platform game with 3D elements and some first-person sequences thrown in for good measure
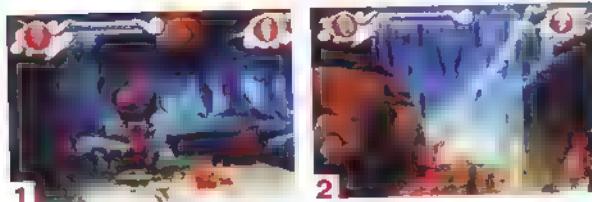
The game is mostly a scrolling platform game with 3D elements – rather like *Pandemonium*, we imagine – with some first-person sequences thrown in for good measure. You control Hercules as he journeys through ancient Greece on his way to Thebes, hilariously known in the film and game as 'The Big Olive', and on to The Underworld for a showdown with Hades himself.

Your hero has a wide variety of moves, including all the usual running and jumping, some

swordplay, and the ability to pick up and move objects around the levels. And one thing that differentiates it from the usual platform fare is the fact that there are optional paths through the levels so that the game should withstand repeated playing. Add in secret areas scattered throughout, and you'll see that the game has considerable replay potential.

What promises to make this a particularly special game however, is the fact that, for the first time for any film licence, it's been developed in conjunction with the movie. This means that the game will feature

[1] Never wave a sword around in middle of a thunderstorm. [2] This looks vaguely like the 'dodge the wildebeest' section in *The Lion King* [3] Hercules. Pillar of the community

[1] Aren't centaurs supposed to have bows? [2] We've told you about that before – you're just asking for trouble. [3] He can even click his heels together. What a guy.

[1, 2] This bit reminds us of the scene in the awful-but-kind-of-entertaining *First Knight* where Richard Gere beats a jousting machine to win a kiss from Julia Ormand. [3] The title screen. No, really. [4] 'Oi, pal, this is a one-way street.' [5] The Underworld, presumably. [6] We've heard of shadow-boxing, but this is plain ridiculous. [7] The programmers and creative team in classic pose.

HERCULES

actual film clips, as well as songs from the movie and special dialogue unique to the game that was recorded at the same time as the movie soundtrack. With voice-overs by the likes of Danny DeVito, and with top British animator Gerald Scarfe as the production designer, this should mean that the finished game has a polish and professionalism that will be the equal of the movie – if not better. As **Craig Allen**, the games producer, told us: 'The beauty of gaming media is that, unlike film, it isn't restricted by

the need to tell the story in a specific time period, as the player, unlike the viewer, controls the experience. Thus we've been able to include some elements that were conceptualised for the animated feature, but for one reason or another never made it into the film, and also expand some environments and characters that go by very quickly in the film'

Sounds pretty special. Let's

hope that the game lives up to the hype. We remember some very acceptable efforts on the PC from the Disney software crowd (*Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, for instance) that fill us with well founded hope for this 10-level Disney extravaganza.

The game is scheduled to be released just after the film in the UK, so expect to see a review in *PSM* around about October time.

Voice-overs by the likes of Danny DeVito, and top British animator Gerald Scarfe as the production designer

[1] Hang on, that geezer's wearing a skirt. [2] Revenge of the killer snot monster. Try not to panic in the face of such evil.

Test Drive **first appeared in the '80s** on the C64. Since then it's earned a **huge following,** across most formats, with its mix of **accurate driving style** and **imaginative courses.** Hopefully the **PlayStation** version will live up to expectations...

When the PlayStation was first released, nearly all racing games aimed to show what a good machine it was for replicating the arcade racing sensation. This has changed, recently, with developers now aiming to emulate the driving experience more accurately with games like V-Rally and Need For Speed 2 heading the pack. Unfortunately this approach has often lead to games being labelled unplayable or finicky. But the newly formed Pitbull Syndicate are hoping to reverse this trend with their latest addition to

the Accolade series, Test Drive 4 The Challenge

Established back in the '80s by US softco Accolade, the Test Drive series has featured on nearly all home machines since it first reached the Commodore 64 in the late Eighties. After the 64, a very popular version appeared on the Amiga, but since then little was heard until we got a phone call asking if we wanted to have a look at this latest incarnation, that is

Accolade were keen to establish exactly the right development team for the new PlayStation Test Drive titles, as **Bill Linn**, PR director for Accolade,
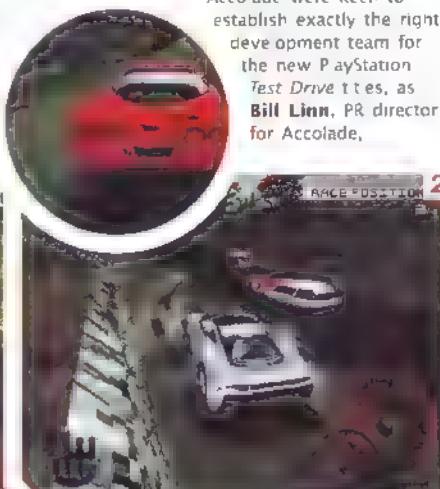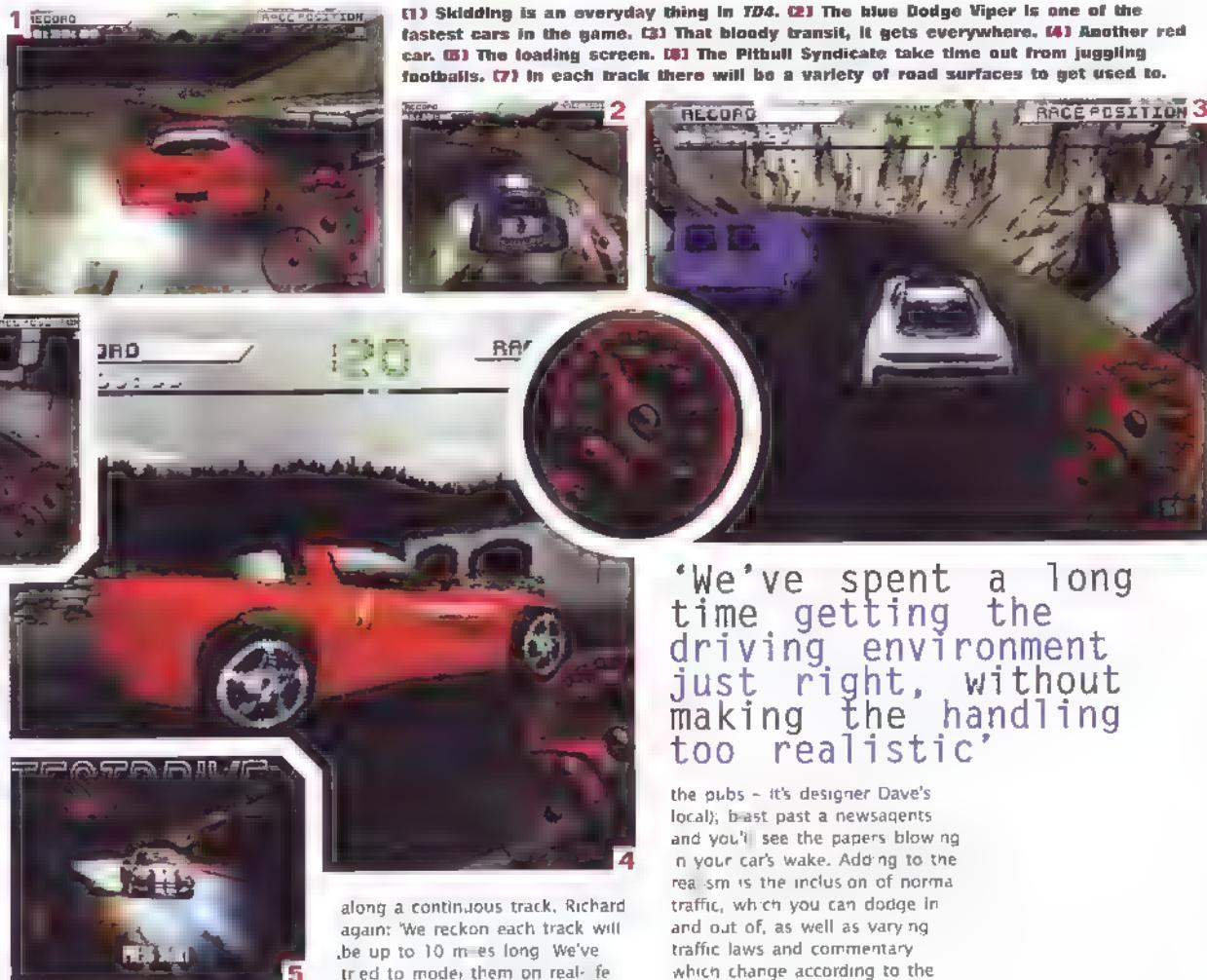
explains. 'We weren't just looking for a team to do one or two games. We wanted to make sure they would be the right team to give us three or four games When Pitbull first came to the office, we knew we had to sign them up'

Pitbull may be a new name but they've actually been working in the industry for some time Working in the new company offices, on the side of the River Wear, are key programmers and artists from Destruction Derby 2 and Monster Trucks, programmers from the NBA Jam series, and the animator from Codemasters' Pete Sampras Tennis **Richard Beston** managing director of Pitbull, explained why they had taken up the challenge of developing such an involved racing game. 'We're all arcade fans and we wanted to give PlayStation owners a real arcade racing game. We've spent a long time getting the driving environment just right, without

The strip across the top of the screen shows the position of all the racers in the game. Very handy.

1 RECORD 00:31:29 **RACE P...**

RACE POSITION 2

(1) TD4 is probably the only racing game with a Ford Transit in it. **(2)** On each track you'll be racing against everyday traffic as well as your other racers.

(1) Skidding is an everyday thing in *TD4*. (2) The blue Dodge Viper is one of the fastest cars in the game. (3) That bloody transit, it gets everywhere. (4) Another red car. (5) The loading screen. (6) The Pitbull Syndicate take time out from juggling footballs. (7) In each track there will be a variety of road surfaces to get used to.

'We've spent a long time getting the driving environment just right, without making the handling too realistic'

making the handling too realistic A game's no good if you're continually crashing'

The cars have been accurately fashioned on their real life counterparts, the most recognisable models being contemporary monsters like the Dodge Viper, the TVR Cerbera and the Jaguar XJ220. But it's the other vehicles that make the game that bit more interesting with drivers being able to climb into some of the greatest sports cars in driving history – most of the older, 'muscle cars' as they're known in the States, will be unfamiliar to UK readers but they look the business. There are 16 cars in all, though only 10 are available immediately, with the rest becoming available after certain successes

Having an impressive line-up of cars is useless, of course without decent tracks to race them on. Pitbull have ditched the standard circular course system, opting instead to set each course

along a continuous track. Richard again: 'We reckon each track will be up to 10 miles long We've tried to model them on real-life roads, so if you drove down the real roads they'd be almost the same as the game – although we have used a certain degree of artistic licence'. A perfect example of this is the Lake District track As you drive along, all the track side graphics look spot-on (although Geordies with a keen memory may recognise one of

the pubs – it's designer Dave's local); blast past a newsagents and you'll see the papers blowing in your car's wake. Adding to the realism is the inclusion of normal traffic, which you can dodge in and out of, as well as varying traffic laws and commentary which change according to the country you're racing in, so if you're racing through the Kyoto streets, the cars will drive on the left-hand side of the road with the commentary in Japanese Other tracks include the German Autobahn, Washington DC, San Francisco, plus the obligatory special hidden one

Where companies often fall ▶

(1) A racing game wouldn't be complete without a tunnel. *TD4* has loads. (2) As you'd expect from a Lake District track, there are loads of tourists. Either that or the bus was stolen.

▶ down with racing games is the sound. Most developers seem happy to have what sounds *almost* like a car. Not so for Pitbull. In an effort to get the atmosphere spot-on they visited showrooms across the UK and the States to record the engine noise for all the cars. Not happy with just hearing each car rev, they took it through the complete engine range so they would be able to replicate any sound they need for the finished game.

As you'd expect from a game with such attention to detail, *Test Drive 4* will implement the way weather affects things, like the car's handling and the track surface. So if you're blasting through the Italian Alps in a storm, your handling will be more sensitive and you'll have to be more careful when you break and accelerate, otherwise you could find yourself slamming into a mountain or over a cliff. Which is where the ultra realistic crashes

come into play. Fans of *Destruction Derby 2* (that's pretty much everybody, right?) will be pleased to hear Pitbull are using everything they learnt from the former game to make the crashes in *Test Drive 4* even better. 'People really enjoyed the crashes, they felt so real,' said Richard. 'We're using all sorts of real dynamics — people are certainly going to know they've crashed.' Judging by the number of physics textbooks hanging around their office, they've certainly done their research.

There will be plenty of ways to play the game, from all-out

races against the computer cars, against your mates via a link up cable or against the clock. You'll even be able to drag-race up some of the huge straights. Yet another testament to the level of detail is the views available. Altogether you'll be able to play the game through ten different views from the usual behind the car, inside the car and even directly above the car in classic *Spyhunter* fashion. Nice.

The version we saw was probably 50 per cent complete and already a lot of fun to play with the cars feeling just right, so by the time it's released it should be wonderful. Let's just hope so.

> ## To get the atmosphere spot-on, they visited showrooms across the UK and the States to record engine noise for all the cars
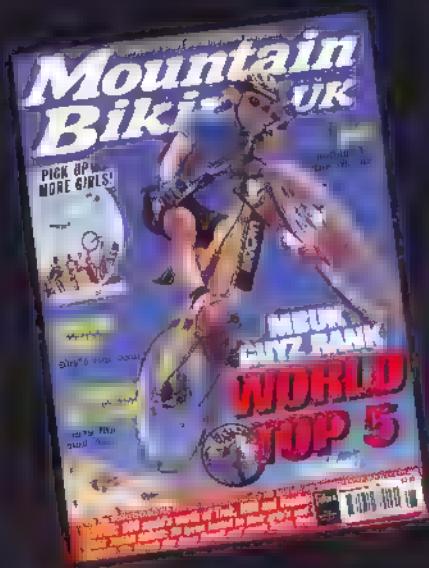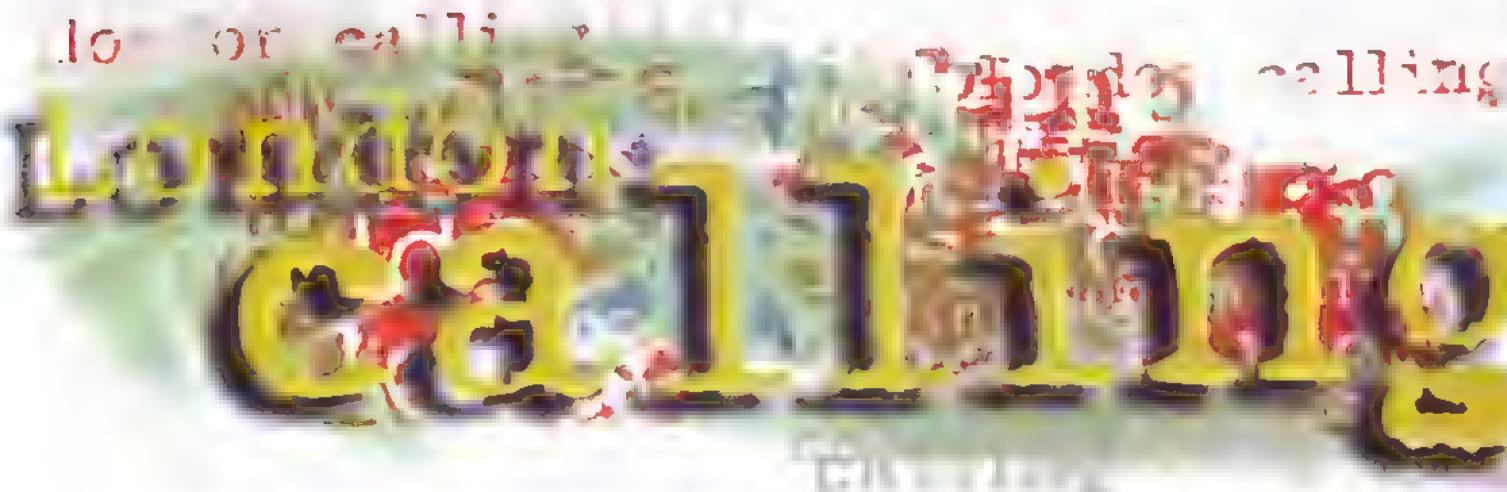
A B C D E
F G H I J
K L M N O
P Q R S T
U V W X
Y Z

Londons calling

Take **Doom** and **Resident Evil,** add in a dash of sinister **Olde London Towne** atmosphere, allow to **meld gently** in France until ready. **Serve cold**

[1] He's over-done the F-plan. [2] Yikes! Some of these creatures have a longer reach than you'd expect. It's a good job Nadia's quick.

he French are certainly keeping busy in all things PlayStation. This month sees the release of Infogrames' estimable V-Rally, Disney's cartoon platform adventure, Hercules, is tripping along nicely, and Kalisto are in the throes of completing their feisty action adventure, Nightmare Creatures Which is why we're here... But first, Kalisto. Who he? They're a Bordeaux based software company who were formed in 1990 and originally named Atreid Concept. The Pearson group acquired them in 1994 and they became Mindscape Bordeaux before founder Nicolas Gaume bought them back. Anyway, the game.. Nightmare Creatures is a 3D action adventure viewed in the third person – sort of above and from behind. 'The game combines the best elements of Tekken and Resident Evil, explains Kalisto's **Cyrille Fontaine**. 'Basically it's an action game. The adventure part just involves the exploration and the use of some switches and levers – so about the same level as in Doom

The plot

The game is set in 19th century London, although the fiendish plot stretches back some time before 1834. Woooo... A secret society named the Brotherhood of Hecate rose and declined in the 17th century, and then in 1830 a stout chap named Adam Crowey sought to restore it to its former power. And come back, there's more... One foggy night, The Smoke is overrun by monsters which, in the winking of an eye, disappear. Crimminy! Legend has it that two shadowy figures chased the creatures from England's capital – the black bedecked Ignatius, a man of God, and Nadia F, a young American

[1, 2] The monsters are no respecters of a lady, Nadia has to be prepared to unleash her sword. That pulsing heart's a bit sick, eh?

'The scenario takes its influences from diverse sources, with many people working to create it', says Cyrille. 'The original plot – London, creatures, secret societies on the edge of magic – was mostly inspired by a book, Anubis Gates, by Tim Powers,

The player takes on the role of either Nadia or Ignatius and must seek and eliminate various mad members of the Brotherhood of Hecate and mash monsters galore. Both characters have slightly differing abilities. Nice one, Cyrille. 'The female character is weaker but faster – much faster than the man. The male lead, Ignatius, is much more efficient. He uses the basic moves, so beginners will feel more comfortable with him. But

(1) Take that you, er, red minotaur-type thing. (2) Ignatius might not be as quick as Nadia, but luckily he's quite a bit tougher. (3) The detail on some of these monsters puts even *Resident Evil* to shame.
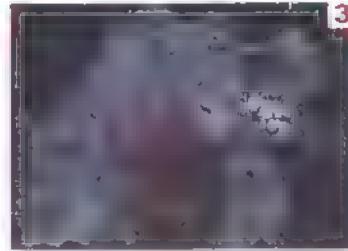
possible. The landscape is very irregular and the obstacles vary in size and height. And even if we're not 100 per cent satisfied, I really think our dynamics can beat most of the other ones '

There's a huge range of baddies to dispose of, including a number of bosses. The majority of your time is spent in combat and Kalisto are keen to ensure that the battles are wide and varied 'The AI of the monsters is quite new in this kind of game', reckons Cyrille. 'Enemies are tough to defeat – the AI allows the enemies to find their way to you and to use the landscape to their advantage '

Another breakthrough is the smooth display – it's running at 30fps – of a very complex background and complex, articulated characters. The game features five different standard bosses, each with specific behaviours and shapes, and the player must adapt his fighting technique accordingly – so, for example, the first boss is a giant five-headed snake popping out of a well, while at the end of the game the hero must face a huge monster on the roofs of Westminster, which makes six

bosses in all.' The missions are stretched across 15 different London districts, from Chelsea, through parks, docks, sewers and cemeteries, and on to the grand finale at Westminster. From dinky but irritating insects to frighteners the size of a bus, monsters lurk everywhere. Some, apparently, hop out of the Thames. Shudder.

Kalisto appear to have got the 'mood' of the game spot on. The dank streets of London are admirable, as are the fog, rain, snow and falling-leaves effects. We're looking forward to *Nightmare Creatures*. It's certainly a little different.

Enemies are tough to defeat – the AI allows them to find their way to you and to use the landscape to their advantage

once you're a little more familiar with the game, playing Nadia will give you extra dimensions '

Kalisto are still working on the player and camera dynamics but the results thus far look impressive. 'Some of the complex movements were achieved using motion capture', explains Cyrille. But most of the animations are hand-made because of the lack of memory. We're still setting up the camera to get the best view

(1) Help. (2) Not all of your opponents are monsters either. At least, not in the conventional sense...

The cast... the story so far...

1 Ignatius Blackward

Ignatius is a man of God. He travels the world, is an expert at foreign language ('*mais oui, aye*'), shamanism, occult rituals and cabalistic writings. He's summoned by a Chelsea parish and returns to London to hear horrific tales of monsters. Some reckon that the monsters have come from excavations at St Catherine Docks which burned in the Great Fire of 1666. Then a strange manuscript appears on Ignatius' doorstep (keep up at the back, Hetherington-Smythe) and he deciphers that the author is Samuel Pepys, the date 1666 and it records the Brotherhood of Hecate. An arcane formula for transforming lifeless matter into monsters alarms him, though, so he sends the book to historian Jean F in New Orleans.

2 Nadia F

Nadia vows revenge on her father's killer, Adam Crowley and the Brotherhood. At her father's funeral, a stranger hands her a

mysterious note which reads 'know about AC. HVHJ'. Golly gosh...

3 Adam Crowley

A former scientist, Adam now masterminds the Brotherhood of Hecate – he discovered the Pepys diary. Crowley's rich backers become increasingly disturbed at his behaviour and one steals the diary and leaves it at Ignatius' door, later passing on

the note to Nadia. But Crowley kills Dr F. Naughty man...

Dr Jean F

Father of Nadia and secret societies expert, Jean is elated when he receives the book and embarks on a journey to England. However, the doctor's enquiries see him mortally wounded, but not before he gasps 'murder, Adam Crowley, Brotherhood of... ' to Ignatius

COWBOY DREAMS

A cowboy with a gun **who doesn't shoot to kill,** a horse called Jolly and a **lumberjack contest:** It could only be **a new Infogrames platformer...**

S ay 'comic book licence' in polite company and even the most optimistic soul is likely to relive a thousand dodgy 2D platformers. French developers Infogrames acknowledge the problems that come from relying on any kind of licence to sell a product. 'Gameplay is the main thing to our team', claims **Nadege de Bergevin**, Lucky Luke's product on manager.

They're attempting to give *Lucky Luke* a much more detailed look than *Tomb Raider's* blocky environments

When the gameplay is average, the game can't be good'

Luke himself is a 50-year-old comic book phenomenon, a cartoon cowboy who has seen it all, swapping his Gauloise for straws and his whiskey for fizzy pop, all in the name of progress. While you're unlikely to have heard of him if you live in the UK, Infogrames see this as an opportunity rather than a handicap; they're determined to produce something original that
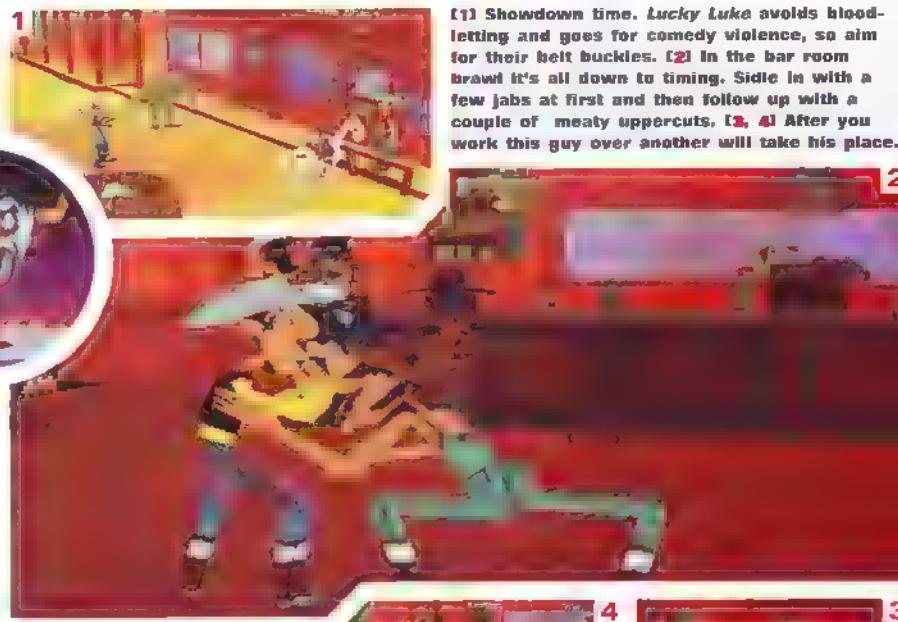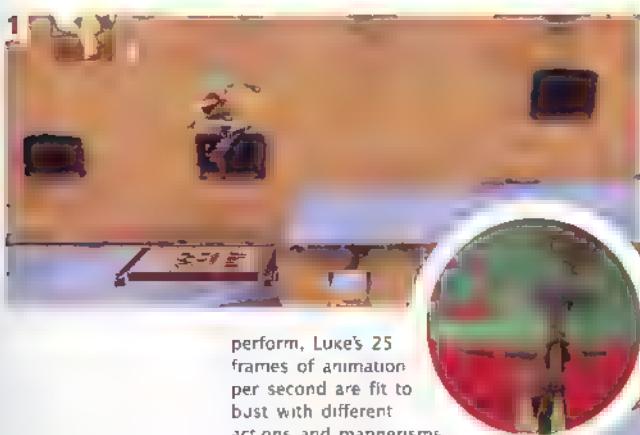
nevertheless remains faithful to the 'spirit' of the comic books. Infogrames weren't satisfied with simply recreating the flat 2D comic as a flat 2D game. Instead they went through the painstaking process of expanding Luke and other characters into three dimensions. Luke himself is made of 'about 500 polygons', according to the game's technical director, **Fred Bibet**, with 'a little bit less for the others and enemies in the game'.

The game itself promises a variety of side-scrolling flattish 3D and full 'into the screen' 3D levels. These platform stages will be broken up by special sections – a saloon brawl, a shoot-out, a log-chopping contest – to ensure that you don't get bored. In fact, with so many different actions to

[1] **Showdown time.** *Lucky Luke* avoids blood-letting and goes for comedy violence, so aim for their belt buckles. [2] **In the bar room brawl** it's all down to timing. Sidle in with a few jabs at first and then follow up with a couple of meaty uppercuts. [3, 4] **After you work this guy over** another will take his place.

[1] These hidden trampolines let you leap about the Indian village. Take the right route and you can clamber inside the buildings to search for power-ups. [2] The big chief looks unhappy – jump to avoid his magic wand. [3] Say hi to Jolly Jumper, your trusty white charger. Later on in the game he takes you for a ride on a pair of skis.

perform, Luke's 25 frames of animation per second are fit to bust with different actions and mannerisms

On the full 3D levels the game's designer, **Rodolphe Furykiewicz**, is quick to point out that they're attempting to give *Lucky* a much more detailed look than *Tomb Raider's* blocky environments. The tree polygons are shaped into bristly firs, while log cabins have sloping roofs, projecting chimneys and a rugged exterior. This is even more impressive, considering that *Lucky* runs at a higher resolution than most PlayStation games. Add in a clever system for continuously reading off the CD, and you get a

It's a button-bashing frenzy when you take on this lumberjack in a log-chopping challenge. Hard work for your digits.

distinctly smooth and cinematic feel to the levels

The emphasis in *Lucky* is more on puzzling and exploration than the traditional reaction-test leaping of *Crash* and *Pandemonium*, and the 15 massive levels will be packed with obstacles and useful objects to pick up, like mining lamps and dynamite. 'We didn't just want the standard power-ups', Fred insists. Even in the flatter-looking levels you can saunter into saloons and clamber about inside barns. Explore more thoroughly and you'll gain access to bonus stages taking the form of 'special missions' like retrieving sacred artefacts from an Indian village.

Lucky Luke is a game of many different elements. At this stage it's not certain quite how the levels will be stitched together. Will some of the more bizarre activities like the button-bashing

og chopping – end up being an annoying or an entertaining interlude? How satisfying will it be to switch from a level with free movement to an 'on-rails' ride section? These are worries that Infogrames will be working hard to dispel as they're determined to appeal to the widest possible range of gamers. Who knows, maybe like *Toy Story* it could appeal to the cowboy in us all

3D conspiracy

Although the team producing *Lucky Luke* have previously worked on a range of SNES and Mega Drive titles (*Smurfs, Obelix, Tintin In Tibet*) Infogrames are no strangers to 3D games, having created the classic *Alone In The Dark* series for PC (you'll probably be familiar with the PlayStation conversion of *Alone In The Dark 2* from our cover CD if nowhere else).

Turning a flat cartoon character into a fully animated 3D model (*Toy Story*-style) proved to be a lot trickier than starting from scratch. 'I had to re-learn how to think up things, how to create a background and a model instead of drawing characters', explained the game's designer, Rodolphe Furykiewicz. No one can complain about the end result, as Luke, his horse Jolly Jumper and the crew of villains look nothing short of gorgeous.

Do the Shuffle Puck

Given the **popularity of ice hockey games** on the PlayStation,
and with former **British Grand-Slam champions** The Sheffield Steelers on
their doorstep, it was only a matter of time before **Gremlin joined the rink**

[1] The very clever scoreboard. Replays are, well, replayed on this little screen. [2] The mighty Canadians. [3] The puck slides inside the posts. [4] The ice reflects the adverts wonderfully.

remlin Interactive have already made a name for themselves with their technically excellent Actua sports series. In an incredibly packed field, their Actua Soccer game was rated by most as the best PlayStation football game on the market, until the release of ISS Pro last month. And now they're taking on the might of the producers of the best ice hockey sims, EA, whose NHL '97 as yet remains unrivaled

The key to any successful sports sim involves a combination of superb graphics and gameplay. Actua Soccer did it, Total NBA '97 did it, and it looks like Actua Ice Hockey will do it as well. As with Gremlin's other sports titles, a huge amount of work has gone into getting the graphics just so. Previously the developers invited sports stars to their motion capture studio for the animation, but this proved a little difficult with a 16-stone fella in ice skates

Gremlin have even used recordings of crowd sounds taken from Sheffield Steelers games to add extra authenticity

■ PUBLISHER:	Gremlin Interactive	■ ORIGIN:		UK
■ DEVELOPER:		In-house	■ STYLE:	Ice hockey sim
■ RELEASE DATE:		September	■ PLAYERS:	Two

[1] One of the arenas. Pretty smart isn't it? [2] He's going in for the kill — watch your knees, goalie. [3] Now where would ice hockey be without the [very] occasional scrap?
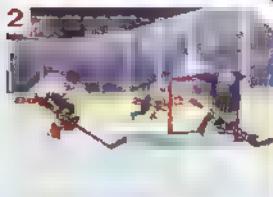
The only option was to hire the Sheffield Arena, home to the Steelers. After painting it ice blue to dull unnecessary reflections, Gremlin introduced a ten-camera system to capture every detail of the Steelers team, the veteran Chris Kelland, and netminder Piero Greco. By the end of filming they'd spent four days on ice, and had managed to record over 130 moves.

The same level of realism has been achieved with the playing environment. Although the arenas based on the standard in-door stadium, there's an impressive amount of detail. Take the crowd, for example. Normally these are just flat bitmaps bordering the sides of the rink, but in *Actua Ice Hockey* the supporters interact with the game — Gremlin have even used recordings of crowd sounds taken from Sheffield Steelers games to add extra authenticity. And in this respect the game surpasses our favourite *NHL '97*. If there was one gripe that we had with the latter it was the lack of any reaction to goal scoring. Not here. As soon as the puck slides over the goal line the arena lights flash the crowd leap up and the Spice Girls' *'Who do you think you are?'* chirps out of the speakers. All that's missing is the pre-pubescent school-girls twirling pom poms, dancing to the Macarena.

Fans of the Newcastle Cobras, the New York Rangers, or the Pittsburg Penguins wanting to play their favourite team will be disappointed, as *Actua Ice Hockey* puts you in charge of national sides rather than NHL or Superleague sides. At the moment they aren't too sure which teams will be included, but don't worry, you'll be able to play as Great Britain if you really want to. Hopefully Gremlin will be making our team better in the game than they are in real life.

Actua Ice Hockey will be released later in the year, slap-bang in the middle of the British ice hockey season. At this point in time it looks smashin', as they say in Sheffield, so we shall await the final result with some anticipation.

It's just like watching a real game from behind the plexi-glass — never a good view.

Whoosh, it's behind you!

[1] When you do manage to get the puck between the sticks, the whole arena goes mad. The lights flash, the crowd roar, and disco music blasts out of your speakers. [2] Even the players join in with the celebration. [3] The most important angle, from inside the goal. Poor old netminder.

Making Omelettes

Frank Miller is one of the biggest names in **graphic novels.**
Now **Cryo** are doing **a game** based on his **ultra-violent vision of the future**

Its refreshing to find that somebody is prepared to take a slightly different look at an age-old problem. That problem — how to bring to life an already existing imaginary world in a computer game – is usually addressed by producing a god-awful point-and-click adventure or a beat 'em up. Unconvinced? Okay, what about *The City Of Lost Children?* Or *The Crow: City Of Angels?* Or *The Incredible Hulk?* See

(1) Oi, mind the paintwork! (2) The presentation of the game is excellent, with a superb 'retro' feel to all the dials and switches. (3) An enemy flyer gets swatted.

> Malicious cranes that take a swing at you as you hurtle past, opposition flying cars that engage you in mid-air dogfights

Anyway, all that is just a rather convoluted way of telling you that *Hard Boiled* is different. Although it's based on Frank Miller's future noir comic strip

(see opposite page), which might well suggest one of the two aforementioned approaches to an unimaginative developer, this is actually an arcade style 3D car racing and shooting game (which also gets around the problem of portraying too much of the comic strip's ultra-violence and porn).

The basic idea is that you are' Nixon and, piloting his flying

car around a variety of locations in future Los Angeles, you have to collect power-ups and little nuclear symbols while shooting baddies galore. The action's presented in real time 3D so that you can look all around you at the superbly realised futurescape. Although there are courses, and to a certain extent you're 'railroaded' by the game into a

[1] Ha! Missed me, you clumsy large steel robot-type thing. [2] Some of the levels are a little reminiscent of the arcade *Star Wars*. [3] Ooh you thrill me, jamming in the rush hour.

[1] The dark future portrayed by Frank Miller is captured well in this game. [2] As well as outdoor sections, there are quite a lot of tunnel sections that are slightly reminiscent of *Wipeout 2097*.

particular path around the locations, within those parameters you can move the car around within a two screen-wide area.

What we've seen of the action looks very fast and furious indeed. The docks section, for example, has enemy boats moored alongside which fire at you, malicious cranes that take a swing at you as you hurtle past, opposition flying cars that engage you in mid air dog fights, and the end of-level boss is a very hard to-destroy helicopter. The power ups are excellent, too, adding an element of variety to the otherwise fairly basic shoot and-dodge gameplay.

Throughout the five missions (each with their own unique backgrounds and enemies) you are pursuing Weeford, the controller of all the robots, determined to free yourself from his evil control.

The early version of the game we've seen certainly runs really fast, while keeping up maximum detail. Let's just hope that the finished gameplay matches the superb look and feel of the concept.

Hard Boiled – the graphic novel

Just when we thought we'd be unfazed by anything, along came Frank Miller's *Hard Boiled* – a barely understandable and totally shocking future vision that pulled no punches when it came to graphically depicting a future city where sleaze and violence has become the norm. In three issues, it charts the bewilderment of an ordinary Joe (Nixon) who is shocked to discover he's actually a robot assassin programmed to think he's a human. Along the way, untold real humans (the bodycount's in the hundreds) reveal their fleshy nature by getting wasted. Unpleasantly.

The streets behind this flimsy action are the real shocker, though. Neon signs advertise live porno events, including a gang-bang pit where the participants are chainsawed. Rent boys perform their services on kerbs ankle-deep in discarded syringes.

Grenades and pistols are freely available from coin-op vending machines. And in a multi-national headquarters, an obscenely bloated boss sits at the centre of a giant life support machine that feeds him burgers, soft drinks and live babies on automated conveyor belts.

Hard Boiled, then – it's no *Beano*, and we don't recommend your mum reading it.

OTHER HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FRANK MILLER

The Dark Knight Returns – Batman as a violent old man. Just superb.
Sin City – More shocking future noir.
Elektra Assassin – Stunning tale of a ninja-woman.
Daredevil Born Again – Reinvents Daredevil, just as he did Batman.

Oddworld

ODD WORLD

And now for something different... Sherry McKenna and Lorne Lanning, co-founders of Oddworld Inhabitants, turn their Hollywood film expertise to videogames.

Abe's Oddysee is the first of five games in the *Oddworld* series. It's a beautiful 2D platform/puzzler in which Abe, a Mukodon, must rescue his fellow slaughterhouse slaves from being turned into minced meat. With more than 60 hours of gameplay and 400 screens, the game looks like it could become one of this year's top titles.

With CVs longer than *War and Peace* and names that would do the scriptwriters of *Knot's Landing* proud, **Lorne Lanning** and **Sherry McKenna** are **Oddworld's two main Inhabitants.** *PSM* flew to New York to meet the odd couple

W e're in the meat-packing district of New York. Not far from the docks down on the Lower West Side, just off of 10th Avenue, *On The Waterfront* territory. The sort of area in which Rocky would have been seen cracking the ribs of some hanging frozen carcasses. And the cinematic references are not misplaced, as we're here to see Hollywood veterans **Lorne and Sherry,** co founders of Oddworld, unveil their eponymous creation.

The games industry has come a long way from back bedroom geek to Californian chic, and the odd couple are the latest to bring their Hollywood backgrounds to the world of videogames. Like Boss Studios, the pair have a long association with the world of film and visual entertainment, especially with regard to special effects.

Sherry, who is responsible for the company's creative and strategic planning, has worked for Universal studios, among others, and has 19 years experience in

will help to introduce a ... ALIVE ...

working on feature films. She has accumulated more than 30 Clio awards (we don't know, either) and over 25 International Film and Television awards. But Lorne is the driving force behind the Oddworld project, and took over two years trying to persuade Sherry of its potential. Also, having worked for Universal and Disney, Lorne's technically-directed many commercials, feature films and theme park rides.

Unlike their peers, Boss, however, Oddworld will not be developing projects as diverse as *Exhumed* and *Spider.* Instead they'll be focussing on only one game genre, and, to a certain degree, only one game.

Abe's Oddysee is the first part of the *Oddworld* story that will eventually comprise five videogames. All five will help to introduce and establish a new genre that Oddworld have been creating, known as ALIVE (Aware Life forms In Virtual Entertainment). The main features of ALIVE are the introduction of Gamespeak, allowing players to master alien languages, and QARMA, which is similar to fate or destiny. An Artificial Intelligence, QARMA monitors and responds to the ethics of your decision-making throughout the game.

It all sounds ludicrous, of course, but witnessed first-hand

it's quite astounding. We'll need to play the full game before deciding whether Oddworld have made the transition from film to game successfully, but at this stage you'd have to say they look like near-certainties.

The gameplay is a beautiful blend of intriguing puzzles and interactive cinematic cut-scenes – and Lorne estimates that even if you know exactly what to do there's still over 60 hours of gameplay to complete including finding up to 50 hidden characters, Super Mario-style Abe's Oddysee, in which hero Abe must abandon his slaughterhouse duties and save his pals from becoming canned meat (hence today's venue), is due for release in September. Publishers GT Interactive already believe the game will 'be one of the top titles in '97', with early press reviews 'overwhelmingly positive'

Win!

Imagine having the use of a **Ferrari for a whole day.**
And **imagine** if all you had to do was **answer three simple questions** to get it...

Race performance cars, trucks and buggies along eight gorgeous-looking courses in Psygnosis' overhead-viewed racing sim, *Speedster*.

Yes, for those of you with a need for speed

finally there could be an element of truth to that 'my other car is a Ferrari' sticker in the back of your Hillman Imp. For PlayStation Gods, Psygnosis, together with *PSM*, are offering you a chance to win copies of *Speedster*, together with Gamester steering wheels and, more importantly, your own personal use of a Ferrari for the day.

For the winner, then, there's the opportunity to woo potential girlfriends, show off in front of friends and foe alike, and to lie to your parents about the success of your current career. You'll get a free full day's hire of a gleaming Ferrari, courtesy of Psygnosis, plus one Gamester steering wheel and a copy of *Speedster* to play it with, so that you can relive those Ferrari moments. Second prize will be one Gamester steering wheel plus a copy of *Speedster*, while five runners up will all receive a copy of *Speedster*.

To win, 'speed' your replies to: 'Of course it's mine' Competition, *Official UK PlayStation Magazine*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. All entries to reach us by August 14 1997.

The questions

a) Who co-s...... w th Sandra Bullock n *Speed 2*?
b) Speedy G.........as a number two hit for whom in 1962?
c) What s the s..... of light n miles per hour?

The rules...

No ca s, no orbes no cash a ternat ves. Oh, and we're q.......
We ge a l tt e bit peeved when one person sends in 15 t............
..................have to bin 14 999 of them A............
...................bin the s.....emain ng one as well You have b.
.... correc......er into us on a postcard or s.
pe, and y.....e n w th a cl

PSX22

UK

made in the

We might kid ourselves that we make the best
television programmes in the world. We might tell
little untruths about just how good our national
football teams are. We might even deceive ourselves on
the impact of British films around the globe. But one
area of British endeavour which requires no self-
deception from the Brits is the record we hold for
top-quality PlayStation game development. We defy you
to be unimpressed by the UK developed games that are
due for release this year. No wonder Britain's Great.

Ocean

Due to their business links with Infogrames and Philips, Ocean now have the pick of close on 100 development teams throughout Europe. As such, they hardly noticed the break-up of their partnership with Team 17 earlier this year. There may be more announcements on UK developed games after the industry show E³ (see our report on pages 8-11).

Psygnosis

Since the inception of the PlayStation they've been THE publishers. And 1997 has been fairly kind to them as well. No let up planned for the autumn, either. Watch them fly into 1998 with a huge variety of genres and titles.

Core Design

The makers of *Tomb Raider*. The 'Phwoar' Design responsible for lovely Lara. More adventures with Ms Croft are on the horizon, but in the shape of *Fighting Force* they may have another PlayStation favourite in the offing.

Electronic Arts

American giants of sport they might be, but they still rely on us Brits for a large chunk of their seminal, innovative titles. This year *Croc* will be the title snapping at the heels of the big sellers.

Bullfrog

At the time of going to press doubt surrounds the future of Bullfrog, or at least a Peter Molyneux lead Bullfrog. But it is likely that one project in particular will continue.

Mindscape

Long-time PC boys, Mindscape have made an impressive foray into PlayStation territory – notably in the form of *SuperSonic Racers* and *Warhammer* (for which there are sequels planned later this year).

Gremlin Interactive

The Sheffield coders have made a name for themselves largely through their in house motion-capture techniques used for the successful *Actua* sports range. Expect more of the same from them over the autumn.

GT Interactive

They may be an American company, but they also have something on the back burner over here in little old England.

Telstar

StarFighter 3000 and *Excalibur 2555AD* have been Telstar's main contributions to the PlayStation and they are set for bigger things as the year ends.

Eidos Interactive

With their coffers overflowing due to the success of Core Design's *Tomb Raider*, Eidos have the resources to expand significantly over the next year. Now major players, games such as *Deathtrap Dungeon* and *Machine Hunter* (see our review on page 120-121) will be watched with interest.

Codemasters

Purveyors of originality from the Warwickshire countryside. With *Micro Machines V3* riding high and *Jonah Lomu* doing very nicely thank you, what now for the Midlands coders?

Psygnosis

Although they have undergone a recent name change, SIS (formerly known as Psygnosis) are continuing to keep their meticulous standards as sky-high as ever by unveiling a number of stunning PlayStation titles.

Formula One '97

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Release date: Oct '97

Despite the weariness of tired hacks (sometimes we think we'd be happiest if we never saw another racer), the driving game is normally the first genre to showcase the evolution of software development. F1 '97 promises to run in hi-res and offer the option of splitting the screen horizontally or vertically, as you can see in these stunning early screenshots. Add to that improved weather effects (though frankly we had enough trouble negotiating the old ones), dual commentary and improved AI and you're talking about an experience that's got us quivering with anticipation.

G-Police

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house
Release date: Nov '97

Place a hi-tech futuristic helicopter in a Blade Runner-esque, Jupiter-based environment. Wrap it in a thoroughly engaging and credible plot. Soak in a marinade of sci-fi kitsch and kudos and you've just about tasted the fine fare that G-Police augurs. And you'll be picking rotor blades out of your teeth for weeks. Psygnosis predicted, in last month's magazine, that this will be the Christmas number one. Despite the stiff competition evident throughout these pages, they might just be right.

Colony Wars

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house
Release date: Oct '97

A 3D, first-person-perspective space combat game, Colony Wars has a Star Wars feel to it. Featuring 70 non-linear missions, it places the player in the role of a rookie fighter pilot who will eventually make the difference over the fate of his chosen people. We get the feeling that this is going to be special.

Overboard

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house
Release date: Oct '97

Yo ho ho, etc. As Ocean-going arcade puzzlers go, Overboard promises it all; ships, ports, sea battles, bounty plundering, end-of-level bosses and 15 specially designed levels. If that isn't blood thirsty enough, there's also going to be a specially designed two-player death match option.

Psybadek

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house
Release date: Nov '97

Rated by Psygnosis as one of their top releases. When the game is billed as a 3D hoverdeck arcade platformer, you have to pay attention. Put in control of two characters (a male and female respectively), each can take their own separate routes and fulfil their own missions. Set in five worlds with 10 locations in total, Psybadek could prove to be a favourite Xmas stocking-filler.
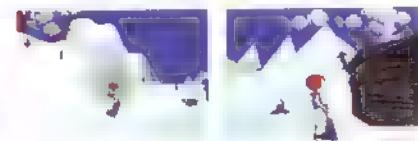
Rascal

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Travellers Tales
Release date: Nov '97

The new holy grail of PlayStation developers definitely seems to be the matching or bettering of Mario 64. The eponymous character of this seven-world, three-time-zone romp might be designed by Jim Henson's Creature Workshop. If so, expect Rascal to be fearsomely cute. The plot involves time travel and seems guaranteed to hook the daytime television set.

Shadow Masters

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Tales 2
Release date: Oct '97

When an evil dictator turns all life forms on the planet into mechanical monsters, then it sounds like a job for mindless shoot 'em up man. But then you realise that to inject a sense of strategy, there are also numerous puzzles to solve along the way. Imagine Tunnel B1 with monsters and increased missions and you're just about there.

Eidos Interactive

To clear up the confusion, Eidos are publishers, not, strictly speaking, developers. And Core Design is just one of the teams they publish. Core have got their own section later on. But here are Eidos' other splendid offerings.

Conquest Earth

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Data Design
Release date: Summer '97

An action-based wargame featuring earthbound alien invaders from Jupiter. Conquest Earth offers a Command & Conquer/Cannon Fodder style of control which is interspersed with 3D arcade elements. A nice combination of strategy and fast shoot 'em up action, Conquest Earth should be a lot of fun, considering you can choose to be the aliens or the earthlings.
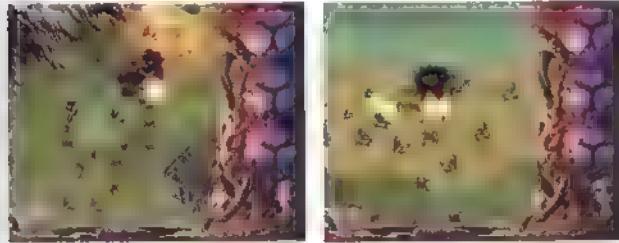
Death Trap Dungeon

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: in-house
Release date: September '97

Based on the Ian Livingstone Fighting Fantasy books. Using fairly extreme artistic licence, the setting has been transformed into a 3D dungeon. There are two main characters, one male, the other female. All the usual fantasy trappings will be there with numerous magic weapons to wield, spells to cast, creatures to fight, traps to negotiate and puzzles to solve. Could take a lifetime before the whole game is anywhere near explored.

Test Drive Off Road

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Elite
Release date: July '97

You've got a Hummer, Jeep Wrangler, Land Rover Defender, Chevrolet and 12 tracks to race on. Different racing environments such as dirt, sand, rock and snow add to the variety. Along with the usual races you can enter a variety of championships from individual races/tournaments to free-for-all races. Add a two-player split-screen mode, multiple camera angles and the ability to link to another PlayStation just for fun, and you could be looking at a game of no little surprise.

Machine Hunter

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Eurocom
Release date: July '97

A 3D hybrid/blend of Robotron X, Loaded and that classic Commodore 64 game, Paradroid, Machine Hunter lets you pilot a variety of droids around a multitude of levels, shooting robots and, well, anything else that wants to mess with you. Relying on classic gameplay mechanisms for its entertainment value, Machine Hunter might just be the adrenaline shot needed for those lazy summer days. See what we think of Machine Hunter by turning to our review on page 120.
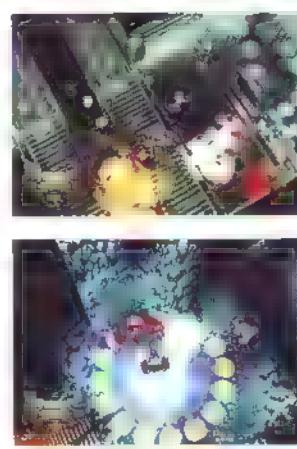
Gremlin Interactive

From humble beginnings, Gremlin have emerged as one of the two major sports game developers in the world (EA being the other one). They also seem determined to create an *Actua* Everygame, as a quick glance below confirms.

Actua Soccer 2.

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Developer: in-house
Release date: October '97

If *Actua Soccer 2* lives up to its potential, it will be phenomenal. Out goes the tired lo-res, half sprite half polygon footballing experience of old *Actua*. In jumps a beauteous hi-res, one hundred per cent super-smooth, new-control-system polygonal sequel. Expected to feature texture-mapped faces of real English and European players, the football gaming world can breathe a sigh of relief that Eric Cantona has retired from the Beautiful Game.

Premier Manager 98

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Developer: in-house
Release date: October '97

When Moses cast the Ten Commandments, the ads from Gremlin were on the other side of the mountain competing with a stone tablet version of *Premier Manager*. It took the labour of 1,000 elite Assyrian slaves just to write the rule book. It's even rumoured that Moses created an eleventh commandment just for Gremlin: 'Though must convert thy management game to every console/computer platform that exists in the world'.

Actua Ice Hockey

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Developer: In-house
Release date: Oct '97

Hmm *Actua Ice Hockey*. Probably means we can expect to see slipperier-sidier motion capture than *Actua Soccer*, more violence and mayhem than *Actua Soccer*, and more sticks and flat shaped pucks than *Actua Soccer*. In fact, it's probably a safe bet to expect this sports game to be completely different from *Actua Soccer*. Probably why it's called *Actua Ice Hockey*, then.
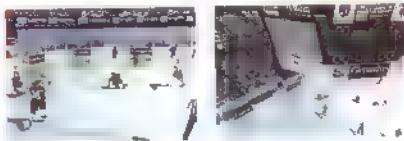
Actua Tennis

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Developer: in-house
Release date: Oct '97

There's a brace of tennis sports sims playing the PlayStation circuit at this moment in time. The simple act of placing the title *Actua* at the front of the sport's name adds a couple of points in its favour. Add to that the experience gained by Gremlin with their other *Actua* titles, and it might just be that *Actua Tennis* serves an ace other tennis games have no reply to.

Actua Golf 2

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Developer: in-house
Release date: Oct '97

Another imaginatively titled sequel, hopes are high that Gremlin make a substantial improvement over the original. *Actua Golf* failed to impress due to its rather out-dated looking graphics and jumpy gameplay. If there's as much revision carried out on this title as there appears to be with *Actua Soccer*, then *Actua Golf 2* could be one to look forward to.

Ocean

Ocean have already given the world *Tunnel B1*, *V-Rally*, *Cheesy* and *True Pinball*, to name but a few of their PlayStation titles. So what have the publishing giants got hidden up their extra-long sleeves for us this year?

Total Drivin'

Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Eutechnyx
Release date: Sept '97

An arcade style driving game which, according to the Ocean people, is very accessible and very easy to drive. The finished game will feature five different styles of cars, ranging from Beach Buggies to Formula One racers. To stop players from going completely round the bend, there will also be 42 different combinations of tracks to race on.

Motor Mash

Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Eutechnyx
Release date: Sept '97

A top-down racer in the style of *Micro Machines*, *Motor Mash* promises a completely different feel, due to the character of each of the cars - sort of *Wacky Races* on the table-top. To those in the know, it looks a lot different, feels a lot different and plays a lot different from *Micro Machines*. Our one prediction for this game is that it's going to be different from *Micro Machines*. Possibly.

Core Design

From out of relative obscurity, Core Design exploded on to the PlayStation with their seminal title, _Tomb Raider_, the game that upped the PlayStation stakes for all the other developers. And they're not finished yet.

Fighting Force

Publisher: Core
Developer: In-house
Release date: Sept '97

A non-linear, 3D, interactive fighting game where you have to eventually defeat an evil tyrant. The different thing about _Fighting Force_, over its more paced arena-based contemporaries, is the ability to interact with different elements of the scenery and use them as improvised weapons. Choice of routes to travel are built in to ensure a lack of staleness. Sounds a bit like the antique title _Double Dragon_, but in 3D.

Tomb Raider 2

Publisher: Core
Developer: In-house
Release date: Nov '97

3D _Uberkind_ cyber-babe with guns and attitude – Lara Croft – is back. And this time she'll be smoother, classier, fashion conscious and much more stylish. Or something. Core are keeping quiet about the story line, other than releasing details of Lara's overall objective to retrieve the Dagger of Xian. New types of move, such as her side-on hand-over-hand, are going to open up new possibilities for exploration. We await with bated breath – as they like to say in Tunbridge Wells.

Bullfrog

Bullfrog have recently been bought out by EA for $50m, enabling them to almost double in size and devote themselves to producing next-generation software. And here's the first game to be published under the new banner.

Populous 3

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Bullfrog
Release date: Oct '97

Widely believed to be the swan song of Peter Molyneux at Bullfrog, _Populous 3_ boasts of a superior Artificial Intelligence system which aims to put the _Populous_ name back at the top of the God game genre. Aimed at the new mass of gamers who may have missed the original first time round. If you're one of them, jump in the air, stamp your feet, and clap your hands. It's coming.

Telstar

With *Excalibur 2555AD* and *Starfighter 3000* already released, relative newcomers Telstar are keen to drop their dodgy '70s 'Tribute to the Rubettes' image and come bang up-to-date with a slew of top-notch PlayStation titles.

Joe Blow

Publisher: Telstar
Developer: Abstract
Release date: Sep '97

A cross between *Mario 64* and *Crash Bandicoot*, *Joe Blow* is being developed by ex Sensible Software development team Abstract. Their pedigree includes games with the gravitas of *Cannon Fodder*, *Sensible World Of Soccer* (still the favourite footie game of many of the PSM staff) and *Sensible Golf*. Despite a glut of so-called *Mario 64* non-linear 3D world games, *Joe Blow* should at the very least be exciting and engaging.

Wrecking Crew

Publisher: Telstar
Developer: Quick Jaw
Release date: Sep '97

The first of Roehampton-based Quick Jaw's releases. This team are responsible for the *Street Racer* engine and thus hopes are high for a racer that does more than just pay lip service to the look of a *Mario Kart* clone. As the name hints, this could be a serious contender to *Destruction Derby 2*.
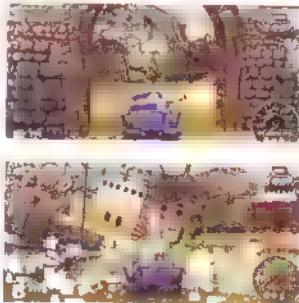
Formula Karts

Publisher: Telstar
Developer: Manic Media
Release date: Sep '97

Manic Media are big fans of karts. They already have *Super Karts* and *Manic Karts* under their belts. *Formula Karts* leans toward simulation, mostly due to an affiliation with Benetton, who supplied the physics models. Rather than being stuffy, though, this helps capture the excitement and fun that only a kart can provide.

Electronic Arts

There are hardly any bigger publishers in the world, so it's particularly gratifying that Electronic Arts have so much faith in the wealth of design and coding talent that's currently available in the UK.

Croc: The Legend Of The Gobbos

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Argonaut
Release date: September '97

Aimed at the 8 plus gameplayer, *Croc* claims that it takes the essence of 2D platformer classics like *Yoshi's Island* and places them in a much more controllable realistic and accessible 3D environment. Offering more than 50 enemies and 60 plus levels, *Croc* might just give *Crash Bandicoot* more than a run for its money. Why? Argonaut are developing the game. Jez San is the 3D innovation man.
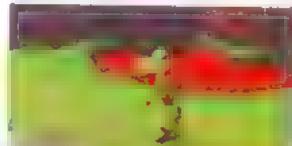
Alien Versus Predator

Publisher: EA
Developer: Rebellion
Release date: March '98

It'll be interesting to see whether Rebellion opt for a complete reworking of this desperately outdated Jaguar *Doom* clone from yesteryear, or release a straight conversion. A straight conversion would be an insult to the power of the PlayStation. If the worst happens, expect to see it around Christmas.

Telstar

Telstar Electronic Studios have been trading for four years, initially they compiled 'two for the price of one' packages for other games console publishers, before turning their attentions to their own products, such as *7th Guest* and ... their own product development and publishing including the PlayStation. Their objective, they claim, is to develop innovative interactive titles with the emphasis placed on entertainment.

Electronic Arts

EA have been around since the '80s and probably made their name with Sid Meier's classic God game, *Civilization*. So when are we going to see that on the PlayStation, eh? Anyway, EA have also been ... the *FIFA* games do have ... the PC ... their back catalogue than ... readers (and that's quite a few, believe us).

Codemasters

Not content with the stunning mastery that is *Micro Machines*, the Codies (as we affectionately know them) are set to make a big hit with – gagh! no – *another* racing game for the PlayStation. When will it ever end?

Toca Touring Cars

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: In-house
Release date: Nov '97

Possibly the most exciting form of hi-performance motor car racing *Toca Touring Cars* features the drivers, teams, cars and livery of the complete 1997 Touring Car season. Advanced AI techniques mean that PlayStation-controlled drivers will remember earlier sights such as little nudges into the gravel track. All the Touring Car circuits are accurate to within 30mm. We can't wait to race on KnockHill as John Cleland

Mindscape

Warhammer is one of the great gaming phenomena of the '90s. At a time when it seemed that videogames were the only kind of game anyone was interested in, this table-top wargame has become ever more popular.

Dark Omen

Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: In-house
Release date: Nov '97

A follow-up to the moderately successful *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*, *Dark Omen* is fantasy wargame featuring real-time arcade strategy to ensure no slackness from budding commanders. Based on the *Warhammer* world of Games Workshop, the game is more campaign-based than mission-based. As such, early seemingly trivial mistakes can come back and haunt you. Hurrah

GT Interactive

Hang on, you may be saying, how come they've got *Duke Nukem* in here? Surely that's an ages-old American game. . Well, that's true, but the very smooth-looking PlayStation conversion is being done right here in Britain.

Duke Nukem

Publisher: GT Interactive
Developer: Nick Pelling
Release date: Autumn '97

Seminal PC title comes to the PlayStation. Will probably be hard-pushed to make as much impact as *Dukey* originally made. Nevertheless, the tight design, believable environment and plethora of exciting weapons and accessories should keep those of us not yet tired of the *Doom* clone happy over most of those long winter nights
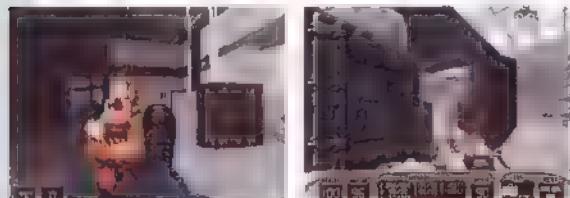
We did it our way... **Virgin**

Virgin territory

Spawned by Branson's world-famous business empire and shaped by Virgin ideology, with its affinity for the bold, unconventional and enterprising, Virgin Interactive has become a major games publisher and strong supporter of PlayStation. *PSM* look at its plans for the console's future and chart the steady infiltration of the Virgin group

THE STORY SO FAR

[1] Agile Warrior
March '96
6/10, PSM2
"...ry game is put togeth... ...ent but the high difficulty level m... ...rustrating and the graphics don't p... PlayStation one jot."

[2] Criticom
March '96
5/10, PSM2
"A challenging combat game that only reveals its depths with time. Not really recommended for beat 'em up beginners."

[3] Streetfighter Alpha
(Capcom) July '96
8/10, PSM5
"Capcom's decision to cling to established values is more than vindicated by what rates as the most comprehensive PlayStation 2D beat 'em up to date."

[4] Impact Racing
(JVC) August '96
5/10, PSM9
"Reasonably exc... ...ore bursts but you won't play... ...doesn't look or drive as well as Rid... ...you still get guns."

[5] Resident...
(Capcom) August...
9/10, PSM8
"Beautiful visuals... ...gameplay and a chilling tale wedged in-between."

[6] Darkstalkers
(Capcom) October '96
7/1., PSM12
"...initely not Streetfighter, which is b... ...oth bad and good. While a it's a sound game, it would have been better if Darkstalkers had been released before SFA."

[7] Earthworm Jim 2
November '96
6/10, PSM11
"Amusing and fun. But this appear... ...same form on 16-bit, provides little challenge and adds nothing to the platformer that hasn't been seen before."

S trangely, Virgin Interactive isn't a part of Richard Branson's world famous Virgin group of companies. It was sold to US media giant Viacom for $165 million, three years ago. This transaction made it part of an empire that includes Paramount Pictures, a major force in Hollywood, from *The Ten Commandments* through to *Braveheart* via the *Godfather* trilogy; Paramount Television, with channels such as MTV, VH.1, Nickelodeon and, perhaps not too surprisingly, the Paramount Comedy Channel (its shows include *Cheers*, *Fraiser*, *Star Trek*, *Beavis and Butthead* and *Entertainment Tonight*); Simon & Schuster, one of the largest book publishers in the world, particularly strong in the education and reference markets; Blockbuster, the largest renter and retailer of home video products – the chain boasts close to 4,000 stores worldwide, after an expansion programme in 1996 which saw a new outlet opened every 11 hours.

However it was recently announced that before the end of 1997 Virgin Interactive will be sold on once more. Corporately, then, Virgin's future is unclear. One thing that's certain, though, is that the firm will continue to be a major publishing force around the world and that support for PlayStation remains central to its plans. In the UK Virgin has already published 20 games on Sony's format, selling around 1.5 million units in Europe alone in the process. By the end of the year, it will have published at least 20 more new titles. This prolific schedule is in marked contrast to Virgin's no-show at the European launch of PlayStation; it was six months after the arrival of the hardware before Virgin released its first PlayStation game (*Agile Warrior*) and nearly a year before it had its first proper hit (*Resident Evil*). This shocking tardiness seemed as good a point as any on which to start quizzing Virgin Interactive's ever-exuberant deputy managing director, **Sean Brennan**:

Late arrival

PSM: Why did it take you so long to come to the PlayStation party? Did your hesitancy reflect any lack of faith in the machine?

SB: No, far from it. But we are always cautious with new platforms and are never one of the first publishers to release products.

PSM: How would you assess Virgin's contribution to the PlayStation so far?

'Our PlayStation support will grow. The Saturn market is stagnant and financially the N64 makes little sense for publishers...': Virgin Interactive's deputy managing director, Sean Brennan.

Command & Conquer wasn't designed for the PlayStation but the PC conversion of this superb strategy game has certainly made its mark on the charts.

SB: Our two major contributions were *Resident Evil*, a seminal product, and *Command & Conquer*, which gave the consumer more than just arcade action.

PSM: What have been the highlights?

SB: The highlight has to be a game from one of our affiliates, JVC. We distributed *Sea Bass Fishing* for them. I've no idea why it didn't sell that well – it *cod* have been a contender.

PSM: What do you think of what Sony have done with PlayStation in Europe so far?

SB: Sony have been successful, because they've been very supportive of the publisher and developer communities and have had the confidence and resources to execute their plans. They also understand the importance of having a wide range of software.

PSM: How important is the PlayStation to Virgin in comparison to other formats?

SB: While the PC is still the most important platform for us, the PlayStation is becoming more and more significant. In fact these are the only two platforms which we are currently supporting.

PSM: How many PlayStation games do you have in development at the moment?

SB: We have over 20 being developed specifically for Virgin. Many more are being developed by our affiliate labels.

PSM: How many PlayStation games do you hope to release in 1997?

Resident Evil is still one of the most popular games on the PlayStation, despite being released over a year ago. In Japan the game has sold over two million copies.

Virgin, has already published 20 games on Sony's format, selling around 1.5 million units in the process. By the end of the year it will have issued at least 20 more

SB: Twelve from Virgin and another 12 from affiliates, including Capcom, LucasArts and JVC.

PSM: Do you see your PlayStation support growing, waning, or staying about the same in the future?

SB: Our PlayStation support will grow. The Saturn market is stagnant and the Nintendo 64 makes little sense for publishers because of the financial obligations involved.

PSM: How do you see the PlayStation's future shaping up in Europe in light of fresh competition from Nintendo?

SB: The PlayStation's future looks strong, with a good price point for hardware, an extensive range of software, healthy third party support and strong distribution. Nintendo won't be able to compete effectively in the UK as they don't have their own office but instead go via a distributor.

[8] Sta
(Capcom)
8/10
'Sta ... ko and has enough ... ics to test ... most hard ... rts.'

[9] Command & Conquer
Dece
9/10
'Even ... asn't designed for the PlayStation, this ... still a spectacularly enjoy ... a compelling and long-...'

[10] Streetfighter Alpha 2
(Capcom) December '96
8/10 PSM13
'Street Fighter Alpha 2 ... di ... of most bea ... its ... ay is still hard ... in a ...'

[11] Victory Box
(JVC) ... ber '96
8/10
'A thi ... man's bea ... still to master. Lacks ... Tekke ... makes up ... challen ... best ...'

[12] Black Dawn
February ...
8/10 PSM13
'One ... best airbo ... raphic ... post ... powe ... d thi ... ions ... ce.'

[14] ... to Hollywood
Febr ...
8/10
'... d ... quel entitled 'Spot ... ar ... lost in the icy wilderness and is never seen again?'

... here's something more to creating ... than slapping together good ... bit of action, the ...

[ ] trap

'...asant enough Su...
...n, but it's as far...
...is planet is from...

N...tek Warrior
...'97
PSM9

'...id ...t to like *Nanotek War...* ...if
...d ...been a decent game i...
...lo...had given it a little m...
...ough ...nd a few more levels.'

[17] NHL Powerplay Hock... '96
June '97
7/10, *PSM20*

'...sprinkling of faults and omission...
all in all *NHL PH '96* is solidly buil...
gives the player a thoroughly entertain...
time of it...and a good-looking one at...

17

18

[18] Super P... ... ...ighter II Turbo
June '97
9/10, *PSM20*

'You can argu...selves, but fo...
this review...*...ighter II* is t...
absolute p...g. Hard to find...
fault with...y.'

[19] Bubb... ...b...
June '97
8/10, *PSM2...*

'If you liked...then you'll
adore this...combination of...
...phics an...make this a game...
...must bu...'

19

21

Grid Run
...7
4/10, *PSM21*

'Your average run-of-the-mill, ho-hum,
...mon-or-garden, seen-it-before ma...
...d game. Not especially good, no...
...ially bad...but eminently forge...'

Rebel Assault II
...
PSM21

'...ear, oh dear. This is a mi... *Rebel*
...*II* is way too short an...like
a...PC game, not a cutt...
P...on title.'

AUS

BLAME MIKE OLDFIELD

Virgin Interactive may not have been part of the Virgin group since 1994, but it was Richard Branson's world famous business empire that first spawned the publisher and shaped its culture. That, perhaps, is why Virgin remains a unique proposition in the sometimes staid world of games software. The firm is known as something of a maverick – and indeed revels in a reputation that draws on defiance, risk and humour as well as (sometimes) aggression, arrogance and poor taste.

This is, of course, terribly dangerous ground, bordering on the pants-on-head, 'Gosh aren't we bonkers?' territory, and there's nothing quite so grim as contrived lunacy or phoney attitude. The fact that (most of the time) Virgin Interactive manages to play the role of swaggering outsider with some style, is testament to its formative years in the Virgin fold – and to the encouragingly entrepreneurial environment of Mr Branson's famously non-conformist company.

Branson himself was an academically-average public schoolboy but a born businessman. In 1967, after bagging a fair few 'O' levels, he opted against the sixth-form shuttle to university and decided instead to move to London to launch *Student* magazine. He set up offices in his reasonably-wealthy parents' pied-à-terre in Albion Street (near Paddington Station) from where he was soon running not only *Student*, but also a mail-order record company, an employment agency specialising in hiring out under-employed nurses to act as cleaners or babysitters, and the Student Advisory Centre, a voluntary organisation which spent most of its time dishing out advice on sexually-transmitted diseases and directing pregnant teenagers to sympathetic doctors. To help him run his burgeoning businesses (which all operate under the holding

> ## Virgin remains a unique proposition in th
> ## sometimes staid world of games software
> ## The firm revels in a reputation tha
> ## draws on defiance, risk and humour..

company, Virgin), Branson gathered together a raffish group of teenagers and 20-somethings, none of them particularly commercially-minded, all of them passionate about music, and most of them not averse to the odd recreational roll-up. They were heady days.

Soon – and given the cultural leanings of Branson's earliest employees, perhaps inevitably – the music side of things begins to dominate. Virgin became a regular advertiser in *Melody Maker*, undercutting record stores by a few shillings and building a reputation as a leading arbiter of good taste (scoff now, Chemical kids, but having Tangerine Dream albums before anyone else scored you big points in the early '70s).

A threatened postal strike prompted Virgin to open its first High Street store in 1971. But Branson's ambitions went a lot further than retailing; he envisioned a multi-faceted music empire comprising a record label, publishing company and management agency. The first step on the road to realising the dream was taken later in '71 when Virgin bought Shipton Manor, a 17th-century country mansion in Oxfordshire, which the firm turned into a recording studio for bands signed to the label.

The first band to use Shipton featured a guitarist called Mike Oldfield. One day, the young hopeful slipped studio boss Tom Newman a tape of a solo project he'd been working on. Despite the fact that the

**Okay, perhaps not the Virgin Island...
but this is Richard Branson's own
personal desert island.**

Virgin was a player in the games business from day one. But only when it bought Mastertronic, in '88, did it stake a claim for a place in the software super-league

material had been rejected by virtually every record company in the business, Newman was impressed enough to recommend to Branson that Oldfield should become the first signing to Virgin Records. The result, released in May 1993, was *Tubular Bells*, an album featuring two continuous sides of instrumental music. This obviously represented an enormous commercial risk and, initially, radio stations and record stores shied away from such a deviation from the 12x3 minutes norm. A couple of weeks after its release, however, John Peel – then, as now, the nation's arbiter of avant garde good taste – broadcast the album in its entirety. Soon it was number one in the UK album charts and a huge critical success. Branson sold the US rights to Atlantic and, almost immediately, it became an unlikely top three hit in the States as well.

Tubular Bells went on to sell millions of copies, make Virgin millions of pounds and, almost in an instant, establish Virgin as a serious player in the music business. Throughout the mid-'70s Virgin was a very hip label and a distinctly groovy place to work. The company attracted the brightest young talent around, gave them crucial jobs, and then left them to their own devices. Amid this liberated and liberating environment, Virgin's 'company weekends' became semi legendary. From Friday to Monday, Virgin would take over a country house. Rule number one was that business was banned. After that, the rules pretty much dried up. With Branson acting as indulgent ringmaster, employees would relax and indulge themselves in a somewhat hedonistic lifestyle. The borderline Bacchanalian experiences fostered a solid if unconventional team spirit and the company went from strength to strength.

Virgin's next major moment in the spotlight came in 1977, at the height of something history recognises as punk rock. A year earlier, the recognised top dogs of British punk, the Sex Pistols, having been initially rejected by Virgin, had been signed by EMI, one of the oldest and most conservative record labels in the music business. Then, when the Pistols appeared live on Bill Grundy's *Today* programme, they said 'fuck' and 'shit' a few times and sent the entire nation into an apoplectic moral frenzy. The tabloids went ape, verkidz went pogo a-go-go, and the Pistols were suddenly the hottest band around; far too hot for EMI which, under pressure from outraged shareholders, announced that it would be dropping the group immediately.

Branson got straight on the phone to EMI's chairman and offered to very kindly take the ▶

Mr John Lydon, AKA Johnny Rotten. Perhaps THE punk icon of the Seventies and responsible for some Virgin lawsuits. His group, the Sex Pistols, were a slight musical change from Mike Oldfield.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS
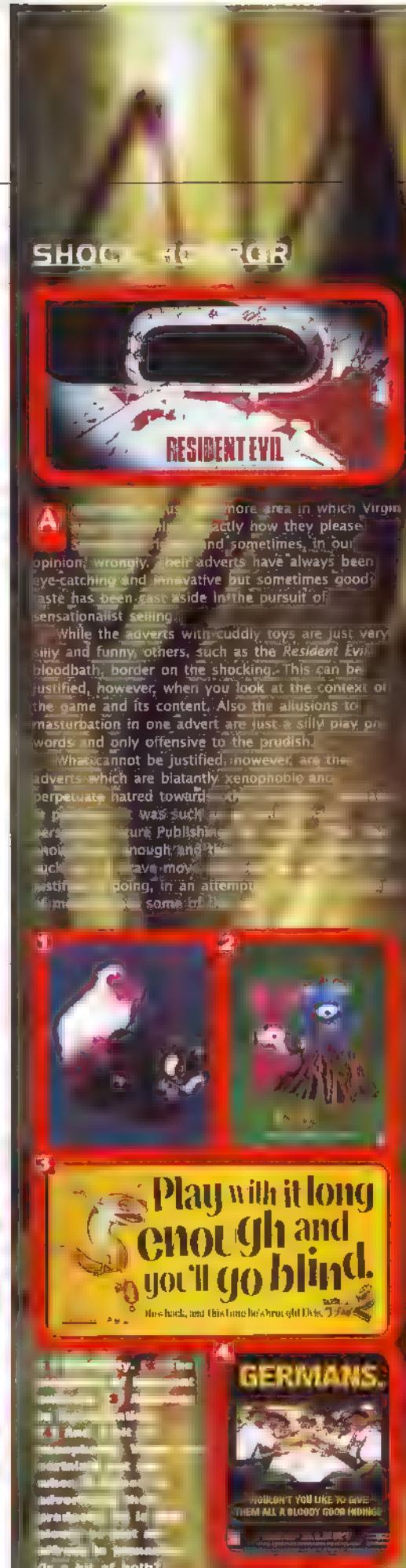
A large part of Virgin Interactive... are known as 'affiliate... are companies, usual... which don't have a... Virgin to act as 'pub... ...nce is very much the... ...ves have with major d... ...and SquareSoft. And incr... ...orld, it is becoming the sta... ...that most third-party publis... ...of the industry these d... ...not always have the resou... ...game properly and so wi... ...business to a large compa... ...The relationships that Core... ...Eidos and Eutechnyx have with... ...examples

Virgin takes products from its affiliate... basically does the rest: orders the produc... manufacturing, co-ordinates marketing and PR... campaigns, sells to retail and generally deals... any problems

Among the affiliate labels currently on the... roster are LucasArts (Dark Forces, Rebel A... Capcom (Resident Evil, Street Fighter Alpha, Sta... Gladiator) and JVC (Victory Boxing). While Virgin... not the origin... ...rom these... companies, they are responsible for bringing here... the UK market and seeing to how their add... would go on the front of... letters of complaint... about them it's only fair that they should also get... bit of credit for...

The p... ...nat the... quite as... ...val co... or pub... ...ing Virgin... great ex... ...holi, in t... line-up... ...d with s... pretty dame... ...ent Evil,... Street Fighte... ...Capcom),... and Victory...

...and Capcom have been...
...lopers which have hel...
...a huge PlayStation...

It was the Sega systems that really helped the Virgin games arm to take off. Virgin sold its Sega business in this country to Sega itself and then went on to become a huge independent publisher.

▶ Pistols off his hands A meeting was arranged with the Pistol's notoriously unconventional manager, Malcolm McLaren. Unfortunately McLaren took an instant and intense dislike to the Virgin boss and, despite thrashing out a verbal agreement with him, signed his band to A&M instead. At the end of a party to celebrate the deal, however, the Pistols smashed up their new record company's plush West End offices. The next morning they were once again looking for a new home.

This time Virgin won the day and signed up the group in time for one of their finest hours (well, three minutes), God Save The Queen, a spunky little ditty accusing our beloved monarch of being nothing less than an alien in charge of a fascist regime. It climbed to number two in the charts in the very week of the Queen's silver jubilee celebrations (many still suspect it was only held off the top slot by some behind-the-scenes manipulation of sales figures by an industry that didn't want to be seen to be endorsing such venomous sentiments)

The Pistols' album, Never Mind The Bollocks, was released in 1978. Its title and the liberal sprinkling of swear words throughout the record (Bodies is particularly fruity) prompted Virgin and the group to be prosecuted, unsuccessfully, for obscenity. To his very great credit, Branson refused to disown the group, or hide behind pompous platitudes about free speech and artistic expression. Instead he saw the legal rumpus and accompanying media mauling as 'a bit of fun', and duly smiled his way through it.

The Sex Pistols and Mike Oldfield can't be said to have too much in common, but they both performed similar roles for Virgin. Tubular Bells and Never Mind The Bollocks have both made Virgin an awful lot of money over the years, but they also helped to make Virgin's reputation as a company prepared to take risks on 'difficult' artists and to back them with confidence and style. So who would be next up?

In the early 1980s Virgin struck gold again by signing Boy George and his group, Culture Club. Again, it might be hard to imagine it now, but not only was George the most successful pop star of the 1980s, he was also far and away the most radical, an openly homosexual cross-dresser, thrilling young girls, confusing boys, charming parents and dismaying bigots by becoming enormously popular all over the world. And, again, it was Virgin that provided the encouraging environment and commercial infrastructure for the artistic success.

The '80s was a successful time for Virgin Records, but it was also the decade in which the group expanded away from the core businesses on which it had been founded; music and retail. (In fact Branson sold Virgin Records to Thorn-EMI for £560 million in 1992 and has also gradually divested the group of most of its retail business). Branson took his company into nightclubs, publishing, holidays, condoms, property development, radio, film, soft drinks and, perhaps most famously, the airline business in which – after many infamous and bruising battles with British Airways – Virgin Atlantic is a

[1] Perhaps the most famous videogame ever, Sonic was one of the successes which helped Virgin promote the Mega Drive. [2] Virtua Fighter followed, but by then Virgin had moved on.

Virgin CrossCountry
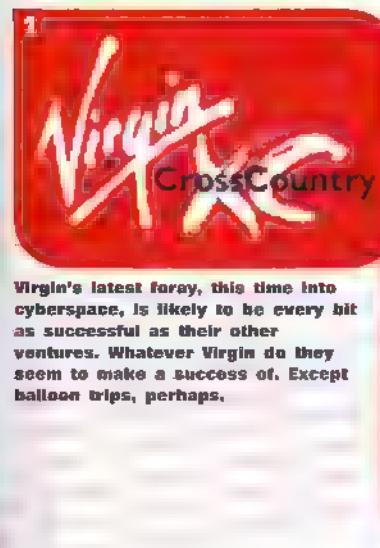
Virgin's latest foray, this time into cyberspace, is likely to be every bit as successful as their other ventures. Whatever Virgin do they seem to make a success of. Except balloon trips, perhaps.
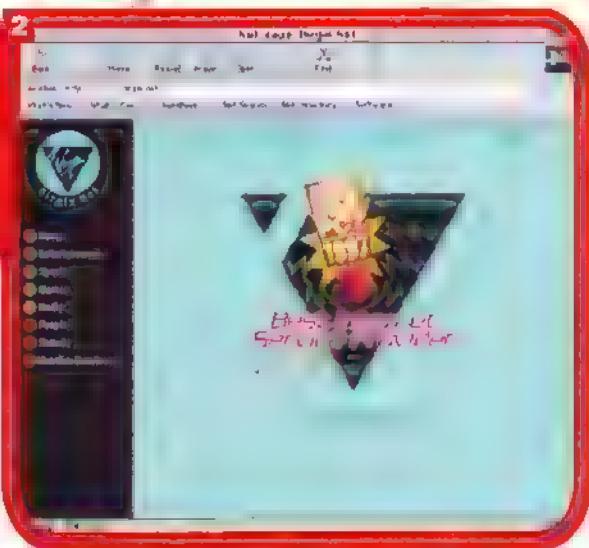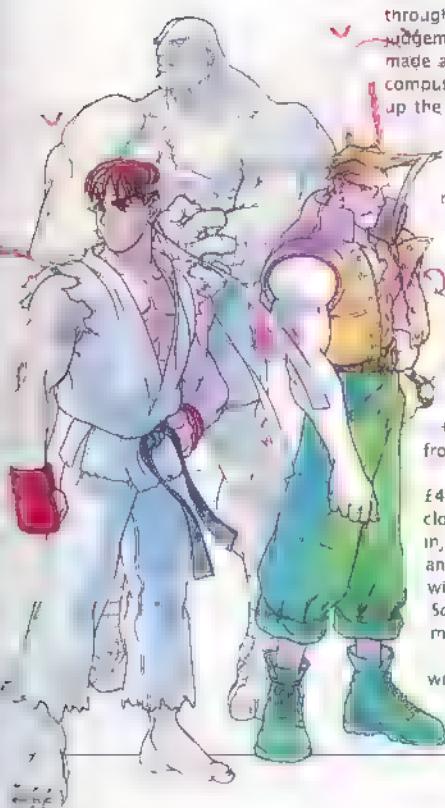
It's widely acknowledged that Sega's success (with the Master System and MD) was largely down to the marketing nous and forceful attitude that has made Virgin a success in so many other areas

world leader. And the preferred mode of travel for *PSM*

Virgin Games was established in 1983 on the back of Britain's home-computing boom inspired by 8-bit micros like the Sinclair Spectrum and Commodore 64, and then developed by 16-bit machines like the ST and Amiga. With a strong brand name and canny marketing skills, Virgin was a player in the games business from day one. It wasn't until 1988, however, when the firm bought a smaller firm called Mastertronic, that it began to stake a claim for a place in the software super-league – although its rise through the ranks was kick started more through luck than judgement. Virgin bought Mastertronic because the company had made a reputation for producing good, cheap games for home computers. Six months earlier, however, Mastertronic had picked up the European distribution rights to a clunky little 8-bit console called the Sega Master System.

In 1988 Virgin was only vaguely aware of this odd little corner of its new acquisition's business. Over the next five years, however – and to everyone's surprise – Europe went console-crazy, with Sega, handled by Virgin, leading the way. The follow-up to the Master System, the Mega Drive, which was introduced by Virgin in 1989 remains the most successful console ever launched in Europe. It's widely acknowledged that Sega's success was largely down to the marketing nous and forceful attitude that has made Virgin a success in so many other areas. It's ironic, then, that Virgin should now be such a committed supporter of Sony's PlayStation and that it has wiped out all traces of Sega Saturn development from its schedule.

In 1991 Virgin sold its Sega business to Sega itself for £40 million. Good business by any standard. Freed from such close ties to one manufacturer (and boosted by a significant injection of cash), Virgin went from strength to strength as an independent games publisher. Within a year, it was vying with American giant Electronic Arts (the firm behind *FIFA Soccer*) for supremacy in the European videogames marketplace.

It is still nipping and tucking with EA for the top slot, with a bulging PlayStation line-up set to play a big part in Virgin's quest to stay at the top of the league over the coming years.

SHOCK HORROR
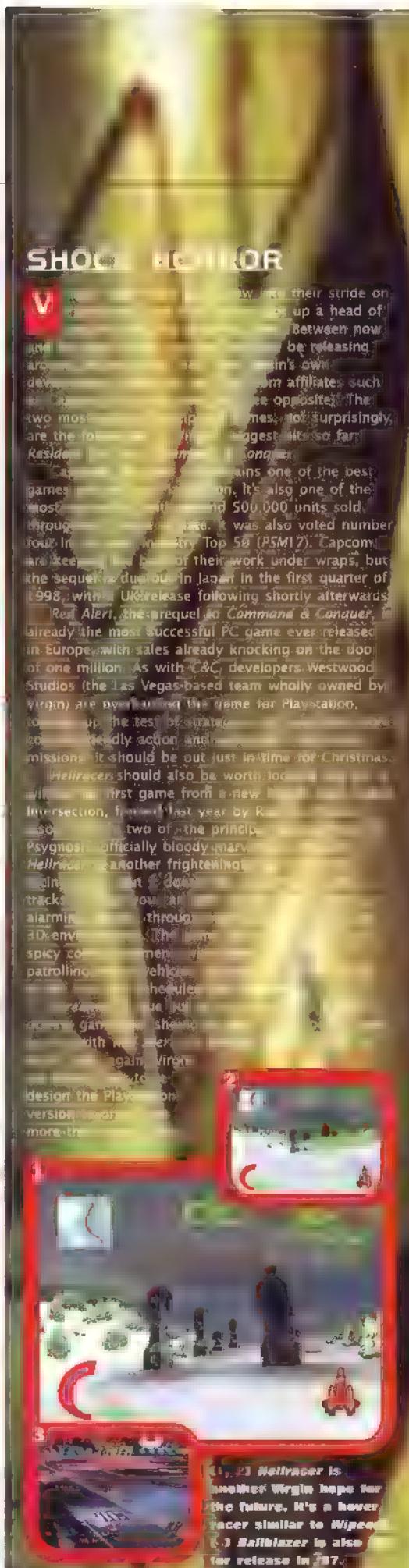
V... ...w into their stride on ... be up a head of ... Between now ... be releasing ... ...in's own ... ...om affiliates such ...ee opposite). The two most ...rtp... games, not surprisingly, are the fo... ...ll... ...ggest hits so far; *Resid...* ... ... *...Conquer.*

...ains one of the best games ... ...on. It's also one of the most ... ...d 500,000 units sold, through... ...se. It was also voted number four in ... ...try Top 50 (*PSM17*). Capcom are keep... ...of their work under wraps, but the sequel ...due out in Japan in the first quarter of 1998, with UK release following shortly afterwards.

Red Alert, the prequel to *Command & Conquer*, is already the most successful PC game ever released in Europe, with sales already knocking on the door of one million. As with *C&C*, developers Westwood Studios (the Las Vegas-based team wholly owned by Virgin) are overhauling the game for PlayStation. ...up the test of strateg... ...dly action and missions it should be out just in time for Christmas.

Hellracer should also be worth loo... ...wi... ...rst game from a new ...intersection, f...d last year by R... ...so ... ...two of the princip... Psygnosis officially bloody marvel... *Hellracer* is another frightening... ...in... ...ut it do... tracks ... ...you... alarmin... ...throug... 3D env... ...The... spicy co... ...men... wi... patrolling... ...vehicle... ...chedule... ...ue ha... ...ered gam... ...sheen... ...ith m...ster ...gain, Virgin ... ...to... design the PlaySt...on ... version ... ...more th...

[1, 2] *Hellracer* is another Virgin hope for the future. It's a hover racer similar to *Wipeout* [3] *Ballblazer* is also for release in '97.

PlayTest

REVIEWED

(1) Awiright! Celebrations at the Ninth.
(2) Open the stance, swing those arms.
Fore! (3) Nick Faldo, putting for a birdie.
Quiet everybody... (4) Just how I prefer
my Martini, as Peter Alliss might say.

Actua Golf 2

Smart graphics, six courses, **new shot types,** and quite **the best commentary ever** to have graced a sports sim. **We join Messrs Alliss and Hay** for a round with the old pros

[1] Wacking the ball into the screen is pretty satisfying. [2] The camera angles are fantastic. [3] Every course can be viewed as part of a fly-by. This overview is enhanced by Peter Alliss's commentary.

he office has gone sport potty. England's performances in cricket and football have revived palates jaded over a long winter of sporting excess, and now we swan in each day in our new Official England Cricket Team shirts, or waving our England Football Team scarves (yes, even in this weather), or swatting heat-lazy flies with our Official Tim Henman rackets. This recent revival in English fortunes (remember, as Harold Wilson said, England has only ever won a World Cup under a Labour Government) has also expanded to include other sports that we'd ordinarily never consider playing. So recent weeks have seen us playing badminton, tennis and even visiting the local pitch 'n' putt course of an evening And why not?

So it was with considerable excitement that we took

delivery of a copy of *Actua Golf 2* recently from Gremlin PR geezer Martin Bramall. We slapped the master gold disc into our 'special' PlayStation and hit the power key The first thing that'll strike you about *Actua Golf 2* is the new graphics engine. Many an 'ooh' and 'aah' were passed as we revelled in the improved textures, water reflections and new motion captures of players. Then you're cheered to find that there are six courses (see

passed as we revelled in the improved

new motion captures of players

[1] The screen-in-screen map is optional, but a great boon to the novice.
[2] Placing the ball on the tee property is the most important part of golf.
[3] Notice the grid on the green. [4] Nice sweater, mate. [5] Hit it too hard
and it'll be in the water. [7] Look closely and you can see the sand flying.

commentary, though, is the way it informs as

become a feature of all new sports games

'Course you can' page 110), a distinct improvement on *Actua Golf*'s rather meas y two.

A few quick clicks and we were away. As we travelled around the first course we noticed all the other new features, too. **The way you can customise your golfer, even down to the type of hat he wears (though strangely there are *still* no women to play).** The fact that there are now a whole range of shot types to choose as well as just picking your club, for example, so that you can attempt to put backspin on the ball to stop it dead, or punch it low through the air to avoid windy weather, or any one of the 12 options that are available, depending on your club and the lie of the ball And the enormous variety of rep ay options that are available on every ball so that you can replay your best – and worst – shots in agonising detail And, of course, the new commentary

The commentary's bloomin' brilliant far better than for any other sports s m you've heard. Peter (the Voice of Golf™) Alliss offers a resoundingly competent performance packed with dry humour (when you're stuck in the bunker on the Colorado Desert course, he quips, 'the only water around here's in my whisky'). Remarkably, even after a couple of days of solid playing we were still hearing new one-liners from the golf-meister, an impressive performance from Peter and the two credited script writers. And then you discover that there's also A ex Hay commentat ng, so you can choose to listen to his gentle Scottish brogue instead, by way of light relief. Or, best of all, you can get the pair of them together, sparking off each other and making your golf experience seem just like watching it on the telly. There are apparently over 40,000 sound bites in the game, so it'll be a very long time before you've heard them all!

What's really c ever about the commentary, though, s the way that it now informs as well as entertains, something that's so c ever that it's sure to become a feature of all new sports games. Choose to play one of the new improved shot types, such as the high ▶

A round with the guys

ver wondered what it might be like to share a packed lunch with Tiger Woods as you sauntered together around a leafy valley? Ever wished that you could spend an afternoon with Greg Norman and find out why he's called The Great White Shark? Ever wanted to ask Nick Faldo how he gets his hair to *stay* like that? Well wonder no more. Thanks to *Actua Golf*'s splendid array of top celebrity golfing names (although no Woosie or Seve, peculiarly) you can now spend all your spare time being virtually the friend of old pros. If you see what we mean.

Your correspondent with some friends.

Greg Norman. Great. White. Shark.

Tiger Woods. We're *this* close.

Nick Faldo. The greatest living English golfer.
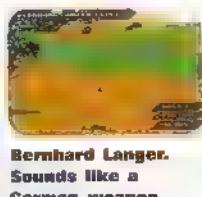
Bernhard Langer. Sounds like a German weapon.

Christina Rocca. Got a girl's name.

Tom Watson. The 'big' guy.

[1] Those cacti are HUGE. [2] Choose your friends for the day. [3] Oh, that was unlucky. [4] Sploosh. Oops. [5] Look everybody! It's the yellow brick road. [6] The score card keeps you up to date with the, erm, score. [7] There's even the chance to practice for the majorettes. [8] Judging the shots is made pretty easy for you.

▶ lob or the low punch (sounds like boxing doesn't it?), and chances are Peter Alliss will chip in with some handy information about the shot you've just played. Too late to help you with that shot, but next time you'll be bearing his pearls of wisdom in mind before you try another high lob in a gale, for example.

So first impressions of the game are brilliant; the visuals look superb and the commentary's easily the best ever. Only one thing remains to be check-listed on this game's way to StarPlayer status – the gameplay. Initially, there aren't any problems   you have a knock about with a few friends and there's everything you expect from a golf game. There's a swingometer to judge the pace and direction of the ball when you hit it, there's an arc that shows the projected flight of the ball, there's a grid on the green that helps you judge your putting. But steadily, as you play for longer, you

There are no different standards for the computer opponents. some amateur player will be just as good as Tiger Woods, but only if he's playing against you

begin to realise that there are a few annoying glitches in the gameplay.

Firstly, there are the computer players. These are just too consistent to be believable. If you play in an amateur tournament, for instance, there will be 24 players; one computer player will go round with you. Now, whoever is accompanying you will have the best round of anyone playing golf that day. The other 22 will go around off screen and be one or two under or over par, but the geezer with you will birdie every hole bar one, and probably eagle every par five. He'll be unaffected by the wind that has you hitting every tree and he'll be causing Peter Alliss to get practically orgasmic with his superb strokeplay. And this is because there appears to be no different standards for the computer opponents. So some amateur player you've never heard of will be just as good a player as Tiger Woods, but only if he's playing against you.

Secondly, this is basically the same golf game that's been going around for years and years, now, which would be all right if it didn't suffer the same stupid

Course you can

Pay attention. Six courses. Three real. Three fantasy made up of well-known holes from other courses around the world. Pictures below. That's all.
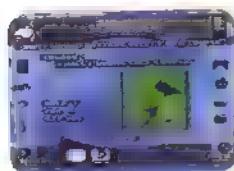
Forest Green is a fairly decent challenge with, amazingly, lots of trees to negotiate.

Orange Rock is in the desert. Don't stray from the fairways – there are bunkers everywhere.

Sunny Green is a pleasant, rolling course with a few nasty holes thrown in.
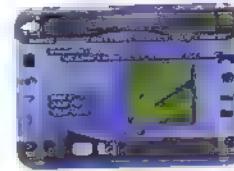
Ocean Island. Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. So stay out of it.

Oxfordshire. The largest of the courses (only joking). Probably the easiest, though.
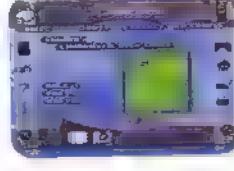
Carnoustie. Scotland's famous golfer-breaker. Tough holes and usually harsh conditions.

[1] It's vital to develop your own unique style of celebrating finishing a hole if you want to be taken seriously on the golf course. [2] 'The Dumbbell', popular with bigger golfers. [3] Where did you get that hat?

(1) Is that some wood in there? We can't quite make it out.
(2) It's a hole in one! Honestly. (3) There's a chap just over the hill, but we can't quite see what he's up to. (4, 5) The action replay options are excellent. (6) Check the cameras. (7) Look at the leaderboard. (8) Change the options.
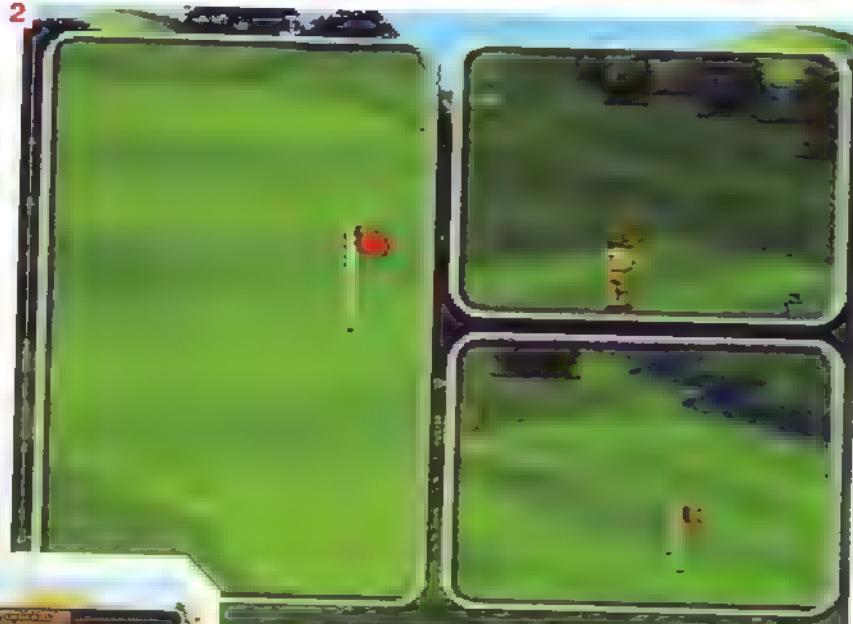
fo bles as all its close cousins, it's as if there's been computer golf game in breeding. So, on a huge dog-leg par five it makes more sense to plough directly for the hole through the rough than to try and go around the fairway; you'll get there quicker. And if you're on the fairway near the green, there's little point trying for a chip shot when a putt can be rolled in *every* time, with a little practice. If you've played a lot of computer golf, you should recognise these irritations. If you haven't, they'll soon become apparent

None of which stops *Actua Golf 2* from being good fun to play. It's just that – rather like the rest of the *Actua* series, sadly – it's *nearly* great, but suffers from overly predictable gameplay. However get some pals around, turn up Peter Alliss (oo-er) and have a foursome and you'll get a great deal of amusement out of it.

We'd like to see...

We set to wondering what other *Actua* sports sims might be in the pipeline...

Actua Cricket Ashes Special
Geoffrey Boycott and Richie Benaud provide the seamlessly entertaining background as we thrash the Aussies every time. 'Oh, that's straight down Mark Taylor's corridor of uncertainty, that is.'

Actua Rugby League
Ray French and a resurrected Eddie Waring together as the dream ticket commentary box team; big lads hitting each other, shin-bones for goalposts. 'A marvellous Up and Under.'

Actua Snooker
Whispering Ted Lowe comes out of his premature retirement to relive his finest commentating hours. And hours. And hours. 'That ball knocked twice and was refused entry.' Definitely no John Virgo.

Actua Sumo
David Coleman (well, he's done The Olympics) stammers and staggers his way through a sport he clearly doesn't understand. No change there then. 'And... er... .'

Actua Mah-Jongg
Well, there're loads on the N64. (Actually, that's enough *Actua* games we'd like to see – Ed.)

Alternatively...

PGA Tour '99	8/10	PSM2
Actua Golf	9/10	PSM6
Actua Golf 2	7/10	PSM22
PGA Tour '97	7/10	PSM12
World Cup Golf	6/10	PSM5
Virtual Golf	6/10	PSM6
Konami Open Golf	5/10	PSM22

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Sharp, detailed, great 9	■ GAMEPLAY:	Annoying 6
■ SOUND:	'A superb shot' 9	■ PRESENTATION:	A tad clunky 7
■ LIFESPAN:	Six courses, loads of Peter 8	■ ORIGINALITY:	Very poor 2

A beautiful-looking, atmospheric game with staggeringly good commentary that sadly doesn't quite deliver the goods that its silky exterior promises.

7
out of 10

■ PUBLISHER:	GT Interactive	■ DEVELOPER:	N.Space
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	US
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Shoot 'em-up

Tiger Shark

When a publisher tells you a game's in the post **three times** before you receive it **you can generally guess its quality,** with *Tiger Shark* we got it **spot on.**

[1] One of the many underground bases you have to blow up. [2] Some of the 'Taps' earthquake making machines. [3] A target lock is essential with the larger craft. [4] Above the surface. [5] The Tiger Shark, very *Batman*.

G T Interactive have a mixed track record. They've brought us some of the best games ever to grace a PlayStation but they've also brought us some truly dire ones. For example, one month we could play *War Gods*, the next month it could be *Abe's Oddysee* – not what you'd call consistent, is it?

At the design stage this game probably sounded really good – a fighter craft capable of attacking over and underwater, taking on the might of the Russian fleet to save the free world — brilliant! Unfortunately something went horribly, drastically wrong in the programming stage.

In *Tiger Shark* you pilot what looks like an extra from a *Batman* film. The D-pad controls the direction you fly in, while the right hand buttons organise your weaponry (laser and torpedoes underwater and guns and missiles above it), and the right shoulder buttons control your speed. This system works very well and the Tiger Shark flies very nicely. But this is not where the problems lie. The fault of the game are its graphics.

Where do we start? **While we played the game a passer-by commented on how it looked like a SNES game.** Thinking about it, they were spot on. The whole thing seems to have been written with three colours — grey, blue and red. The enemy craft look terrible, everything's very blocky and there aren't any effects to persuade you that you're underwater - not even the odd bubble or two.

The gameplay is nothing special either. Essentially all you do is fly around shooting things while trying not to get shot. While the missions do have objectives, they're poorly designed and quickly become repetitive. To top it all off, it's also far too hard to play. After a while we got so bored we just flew around the bottom of the sea shooting at the tower blocks.

Add the graphics to the gameplay and what you're left with is a confused mess. It might sound harsh, but playing *Tiger Shark* for about five minutes is all it takes to convince you never to play it again. But for the point of the review, we wouldn't have gone near it in the first place.

[1] One of the many warships you have to sink in the game. [2] An underwater forest.

Alternatively...

Black Dawn	8/10	PSM
Warhawk	8/10	PSM
Soviet Strike	7/10	PSM
Starfighter 3000	5/10	PSM
Tiger Shark	4/10	PSM

backissues

Every month the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine* covers the **world of PlayStation software** – In words and pictures and on our **exclusive demo disc.** Don't miss an issue! **Order now!**
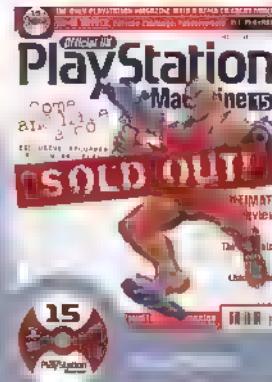
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Johnny Vaugha
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"It's up for grabs now!"
**THE GREATEST
LAST-MINUTE
GOALS**

ISSUE 24
OUT NOV

■ PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts	■ DEVELOPER:	Blizzard Entertainment
■ RELEASE DATE:	August	■ ORIGIN:	US
■ PRICE:	£44.99	■ STYLE:	Real time strategy

PlayTest

Warcraft 2: The Dark Saga

In the **aftermath** of *Command & Conquer*'s massive release, its **arch rival arrives on the PlayStation**. But which is the better game?

(1) Life on the homeworld of the orcs is tough, brutal and short. (2) The four campaigns in the game include battles in a wide variety of terrains, from the icy north to the lush grasslands of the main continent. (3) Animated cut scenes are used to set the scene and continue the plots of the campaigns.

here's little doubt that *Command & Conquer* has been largely responsible for shifting the real-time strategy game into the spotlight as one of the hottest genres of the moment in the PC games market. The overwhelming combination of its incredibly addictive gameplay and the tidal wave of hype surrounding its release was a potent force indeed, and the result has been a mad rush by almost every software house to have its own real-time hit.

Lurking in the background, though, was Blizzard Entertainment. This small American development company had already cottoned on to the possibilities of real-time strategy, perhaps inspired by *Dune 2*, the predecessor to *C&C* itself. The result was *Warcraft*, which was released to moderate success some time before *C&C* came along. Then, in the wake of Westwood's

massive hit, came the much-improved sequel.

Warcraft II quickly managed to divide the PC gaming public into two groups – although most players enjoyed both games, when it came to the question of which was best arguments started. Now things are all set for a repeat performance on the PlayStation.

It has to be said that, at their cores, both *Warcraft II* and *C&C* are very similar games. Both feature a series of missions played on battlefields viewed from an

Warcraft II is set in a fantasy world where technology is at the level of the Middle Ages, but magic is very real.

(1) Each mission has different objectives. (2) Each mission starts with few units.

[1] At the start of the first campaign, the orcs are pursuing the humans across the ocean. [2] The information button gives you details of each unit and building. [3] Enemy towns are often protected by walls that you have to smash down to reach your target. [4] The first priority in most missions is to start collecting gold and bringing it back to your base.

overhead, slightly isometric view. Both involve constructing various buildings which in turn allow you to produce a wide variety of units. And both use a fairly simple point-and-click interface to throw these forces at each other in a orgy of death and destruction that's amazingly addictive and great fun to boot. Despite this, however, the two games are far from identical.

The key differences between the two games lie in their sense of scale and settings. While *Command & Conquer* features epic conflicts, often involving dozens of troops and vehicles on either side, *Warcraft II* is based on smaller scale battles, with fewer units to control. And in contrast to *C&C*'s near-future Earth, *Warcraft II* is set in a fantasy world where technology is at the level of the Middle Ages, but magic is very real. The humans of this world lived largely in peace with each other and the races of elves and dwarves, until the coming of the orcs. These vicious, green-skinned creatures had discovered a magical portal that linked their world – a harsh place populated by deadly monsters and torn by continual war between the different

The important differences, though, all lie in the gameplay, and mostly spring from *Warcraft II*'s increased level of detail.

[1] The humans prepare to destroy the portal between the orc world and their own. [2] At the end of each battle your performance is rated.
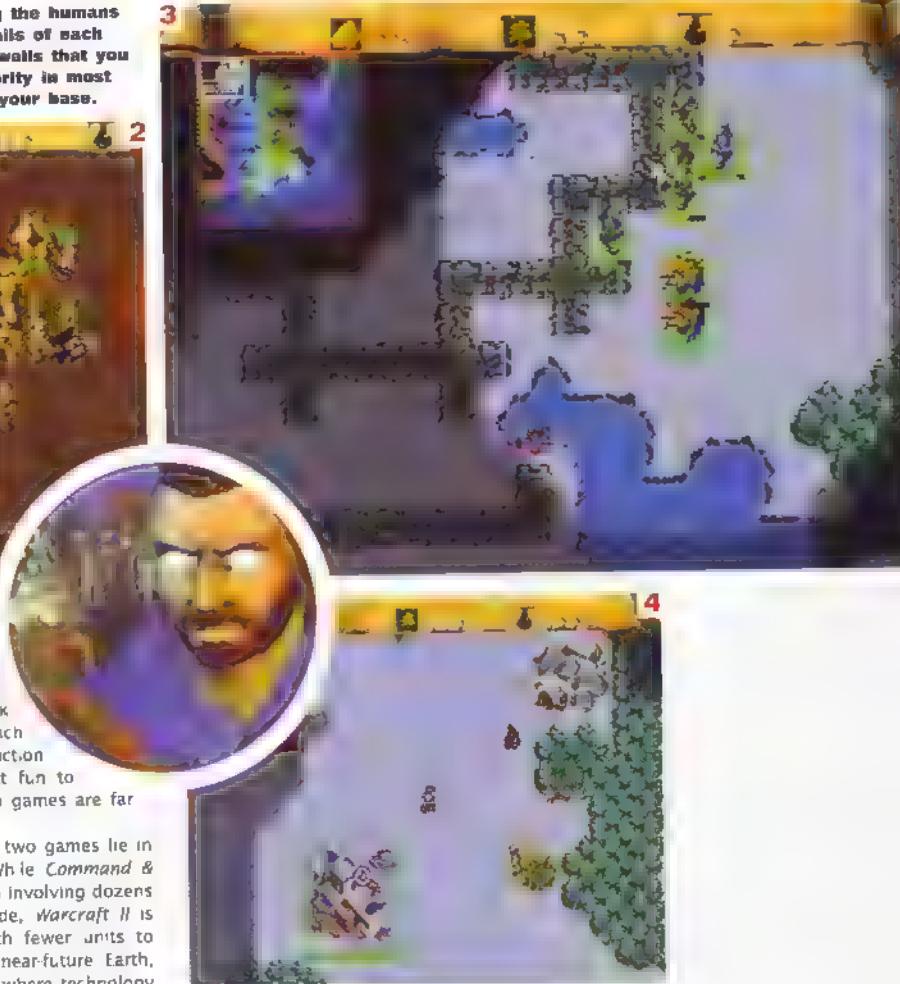
orc tribes to this peaceful planet, and quickly set out on a campaign of conquest.

Together *Warcraft II*'s smaller scale and fantasy setting result in many differences when compared to *C&C*. The most obvious ones are in the graphics, of course. *Warcraft II* has slightly exaggerated comic-book style that's quite different to the high-tech *C&C*, and the smaller scale means that the display is zoomed in closer to the action, allowing for larger sprites and more detail on each unit's animation.

The important differences, though, all lie in the gameplay, and mostly spring from *Warcraft II*'s increased level of detail – another result of the smaller scale. For a start, many of the forces available in *Warcraft II* are armed only with melee weapons and have to get up close and personal to bash on the enemy, whereas all of *C&C*'s combat units have ranged weapons of some kind. The result is that there's more variation between units in *Warcraft II* than in *C&C*, and, because the scale is smaller, each individual unit is more important.

Likewise whereas you generate cash in *C&C* simply by collecting mineral deposits, *Warcraft II* has three distinct resources – gold, wood, and oil – each of which is required in different amounts to construct the various buildings and units available. Gold comes from mines that are scattered around each map, and must be collected by your worker units and brought back to your base. Wood, obviously enough, comes from the forests that dot most maps, and is also collected by worker units, but takes longer to harvest as the trees

[1] The portal between worlds [2] The Town Hall forms the centre of any human base.

[1] More than one serf can cooperate to finish important buildings quickly.
[2] Animated maps keep track of your progress through each campaign.

'Ultimately, then,' the choice between *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft II* is largely a matter of taste and style.'
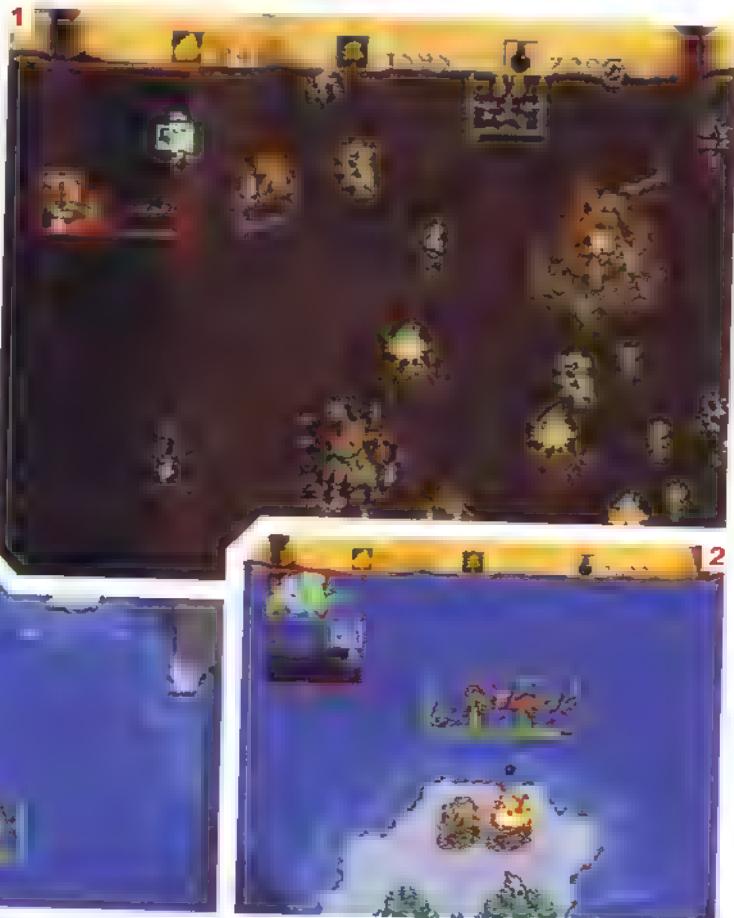
two, plus dozens of single mission maps to play if you just fancy a quick one off game

Unfortunately, though, *Warcraft II* does suffer from many of the same problems with its control system Once aga n, despite the fact that the game was originally designed to be played with a mouse, it doesn't support the Sony one available for the PlayStation something for which there really is no good excuse or reason. What's more, aithough there have been a couple of changes to the interface designed to make it easier to play with a joypad, it could have been made even simpler w th a little thought. On the plus side it is s ightly better than the C&C system, and the smaller scale of the game also helps - with fewer units to worry about, it's easier to keep track of and control them In all, the conversion from the PC orig nal is fa,r, but far from ideal.

Ultimately, then, the choice between *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft II* is largely a matter of taste and style. If you're interested in something with a little more depth and detail than C&C, this is it. On the other hand, *Warcraft II* does lack some of C&C's epic scope and polished presentation.

have to be chopped down. Oil is only available from specific spots in the ocean, and requires an oil rig to extract it and tanker ships to ship it back. In addition, every living unit you produce requires a unit of food, which is produced by farms.

Another key d.fference between the two games is *Warcraft II*'s 'fog of war'. Like *C&C*, at the beg nning of each level in *Warcraft II* most of the map is blacked out and hidden, and you have to send out units to explore. Unike *C&C*, though, in *Warcraft II* once an area has been explored you can see the terrain, but can only see enemy units if they're in sight of one of your units. This makes advance scouts and look-outs important, otherwise an enemy army can sneak right up on your base before you spot it

In short, then, *Warcraft II* is a lot more deta..ed than *C&C* and offers quite a few more tactical and strategic options. The P ayStat.on version is also a lot bigger, as it includes both the original campaign and the one from the *Beyond The Portal* expansion set that was re.eased separately for the PC, both of which can be played as either the orcs or the humans. Effectively, then, you get four campaigns as compared to *C&C's*

[1] As the game progresses, the missions get tougher and tougher. Although scouting this vast orc encampment by air isn't too hard, actually attacking and destroying it is another matter entirely. [2] and [3] Many missions take place on the coast or on small islands, and so *Warcraft II* features a lot of naval conflict. Both the orcs and humans have several different ships to choose from (including magically powered submarines!) and the battles at sea often decide the outcome of the whole mission. [4] The overview map in the top right of the screen is vital for keeping track of what's going on around you.

VERDICT

- GRAPHICS: Well animated and colourful 7
- SOUND: Good speech and effects 7
- LIFESPAN: Four whole campaigns 9
- GAMEPLAY: Let down by the controls 8
- PRESENTATION: Effective if a little dull 8
- ORIGINALITY: Many innovative ideas 8

Almost as compelling and addictive as *Command & Conquer*, with more depth and detail to the gameplay – but the same problems with the controls.

9
out of 10

PRESS START · 92 · PRESS START

TAK · PRESS START

[1, 2] Two angles on one of the 'grab and pull you in' moves. Sigh. [3] A lot of characters can pull weapons out of thin air. [4] The 3D button in action – nice idea, shame about the game...

Wargods

Another 3D beat 'em up? From the developers of Mortal Kombat? Oh, the horror...

We proud PlayStation owners are hardly short of 3D beat 'em ups to choose from. Already there have been over a dozen available, including Namco's utterly stunning trio of *Tekken, Tekken 2* and *Soul Blade*. You might be forgiven, then, for assuming that no one would even bother releasing a new one unless it was truly original, or very, very special

As *Wargods* proves, though, you'd also be wrong. Based on the Midway arcade game of the same name, *Wargods'* main claim to fame is having been designed by the team responsible for *Mortal Kombat*. In fact, playing the game for about five minutes makes it fairly clear that, for all intents and purposes, *Wargods* is little more than *Mortal Kombat* in 3D.

Obviously, if you're the kind of rabid *Mortal Kombat* fan who believes it to be the best beat 'em up ever (and we're reliably informed that such people do exist), this is going to be great news. You can safely run off to the shops immediately and buy a copy of *Wargods* We're sure you'll be very happy.

For those who saw through all the hype, never really understood what the fuss was all about, realise that beat 'em ups have come a long way since *Mortal Kombat*, or simply never liked it in the first place, though, things are a lot less rosy. *Wargods* really is *Mortal Kombat* in 3D, and suffers from all the same flaws and problems as the original game

The characters have different names, of course, but despite the new 3D engine, they're still displayed in the same poorly animated and jerky fashion. Speed is attained not by clever programming, but by simply cutting frames of animation. The characters even move in the same way, with arms and legs often seeming to be unconnected to the rest of the body – most punches, for example, see the arms moving while the torso and legs remain largely rigid. It's a far cry from the silky delights of *Tekken 2*, where even the smallest move results in a realistic shift of the characters whole posture and position.

Likewise, the basic attacks are all but identical to MK – high and low punches and kicks, which can be varied by the joypad direction to create roundhouses, sweeps and uppercuts. Even the special moves are largely identical – two characters have range attacks that grab the opponent and pull them into an uppercut, for example. Hmm.

The similarity of the moves also means that the gameplay suffers from the same problems. The lack of range of the basic moves (most require you to be standing almost toe-to-toe to have any chance of connecting) means that special attacks, especially ranged ones, dominate the game, which quickly becomes repetitive and dull. There are a fair number of combos that can be performed, but once again their lack of range makes them fairly pointless a lot of the time

A lot of the arenas look quite nice – quite a lot nicer than the animation, anyway.

VAL

PRESS START

[1, 2] Warhead tries to warm up Vallah, who's feeling a little chilly in her somewhat sparse outfit...

Perhaps the biggest shame is that *Wargods* does have one really good idea – the 3D button, which you can use to vary the action

To be fair, there are a couple of redeeming features. Many of the character designs are quite good – they're poorly animated and lack variety in terms of moves, but they do look quite interesting. Likewise, many of the backgrounds are very neatly portrayed, certainly a step above average.

Perhaps the biggest shame, though, is that *Wargods* does have one really good idea – the 3D button. By default, this is the L1 button on the controller and by using it in combination with other moves, you can vary the action in a three-dimensional way. Holding it and pressing up or down on the joypad, for example, causes your character to circle their opponent. Other combinations allow you to dive or somersault to either side, or quickly side-step (much like in *Soul Blade*).

Many of the special moves also have two versions – one without the 3D button, and one with. Ranged attacks without the button, for example, tend to fly straight at the target, while holding it down during the

move causes the attack to circle, arc, or zoom out in all directions. Combined with the preponderance of teleport moves, this means that the three-dimensional nature of the game is put to good use, and there's a lot of movement around the ring.

Unfortunately, though, not even this very simple but very effective idea is enough to add more than a few minutes to the game's lifespan. In something like *Tekken 2*, it would have been the icing the cake. In *Wargods*, it's simply wasted.

Alternatively...

Tekken 2	10/10	PSM11
Tekken	9/10	PSM2
Soul Blade	8/10	PSM18
Total NBA 1	8/10	PSM16
Battle Arena Toshinden 2	7/10	PSM4
Wargods	3/10	PSM22

[1] You have to get this close to hit with most moves. [2] Both 'boss' characters are rather large in stature.

Machine Hunter

Strap on some exo-armour, and grab your guns. **Yet again** you must **bail out the Earth** in this *Loaded*-type **blaster** from Eidos

F or anyone familiar with *Loaded*, *Machine Hunter* is going to feel like a trip down memory lane. For those of you who aren't, this is a viewed-from-above shoot 'em up in which you are mankind's sole chance of survival.

It's the 21st century and humanity has established colonies throughout the galaxy. Robots are advanced enough to remove the need for humans to do everyday tasks, leaving them to follow other pursuits. But this Utopia comes to a rapid end when mining robots become infected by an alien virus which affects their semi-organic brains, causing them to rebel against their human masters. The virus is spreading at pace, and you must stop it before it reaches Earth.

Each of the games 16 levels takes place in different areas, which vary from a mine to an alien city, and are joined together by a mission-based campaign. The first level eases you in with a simple rescue operation but after that things rapidly gather pace. **Level two, for instance, not only sets you on a rescue mission but you must find three sets of explosives, place them, then run back to the exit.** And all this takes place in two maze-like areas joined together by teleporters, within a time limit.

To help you destroy the enemy droids, you can take over and control one of nine robots, each with their own characteristics and weapons. It isn't as easy as just climbing into one of them, though; they start off under the control of their malfunctioning brain, so you must pummel them into a submissive state before climbing aboard. More typical power-ups come in the form of secondary weapons, like mines and smart bombs, and you can upgrade your standard gun. And we especially
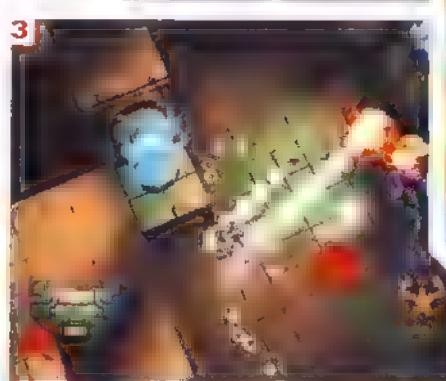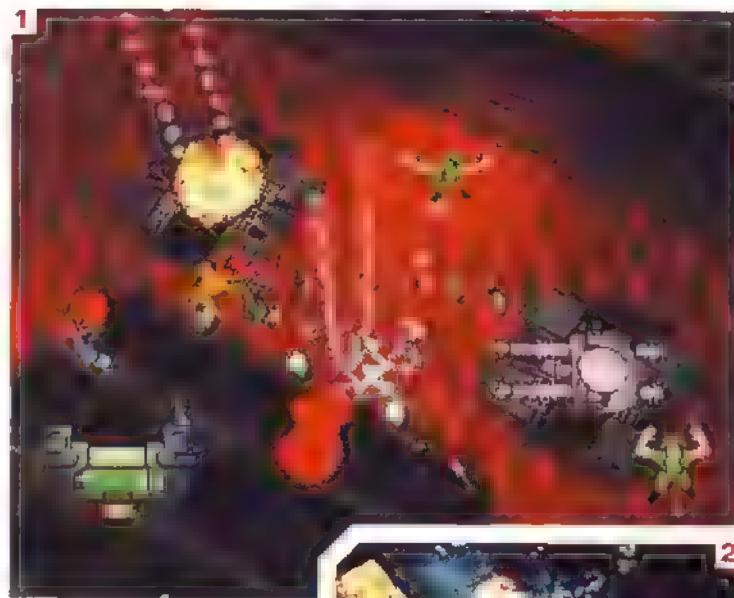
While the split-screen two-player option adds to the gameplay, *Machine Hunter* would have looked equally at home on the Amiga

[1] Rescue the hostages to complete each mission. [2] On later levels, the lava presents hazards as well. [3] The action can get quite hectic but you never feel completely out-gunned.

Two Players · **Memory card Compatible**

The pre-rendered sequences add a nice touch to the proceedings and give you a nice sense of taking part in a real campaign rather than just randomly linked levels. The rendered animations of the various robots in the game also whet your appetite, making you try all the harder to find them.

liked the orbiting spiky ball which helps dispatch enemies in those hard-to-reach places

Occasionally you can become a little disorientated, especially when you're trying to escape a level before it blows up, but the inclusion of a rather nifty 3D wireframe map makes it a lot easier to negotiate a level in the heat of the moment. Also thankfully the enemies never come too thick and fast, so you have time to work out tactics and strategy before approaching each mission. The controls borrow the same mechanics from games such as Robotron, with the directions controlling movement and the buttons controlling the direction you fire. It takes a bit of practice to knock seven bells out of the opposition, but you get the hang of it with time

Machine Hunter incorporates some nice touches, such as being able to leave a trail of blood after running over a dead body, but there are a couple of gripes that detract from the overall enjoyment. The way the polygonal floor shimmers and breaks up slightly as you move, for instance. And the fact that you feel sea-sick if you use any other camera angle other than a fixed one. And while the split screen, two-player option adds to the gameplay, giving you the chance to save the world with a friend, or both to compete for the honour, there's no getting away from the fact that Machine Hunter would have looked equally at home on the Amiga and doesn't stretch the PlayStation as such. That aside, this is a game that you'll probably want to come back to, even if it does score poorly in the originality stakes.

Alternatively...

[1] Eventually you'll find a weapon you prefer.
[2] The explosion effects are great. [3] The action can get claustrophobic, giving you the chance to prove your mettle at close quarters and still win.

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Divide 32-bit by two **6**	■ GAMEPLAY:	Solid blasting **7**	A reasonably absorbing take on
■ SOUND	Competent **5**	■ PRESENTATION:	Great pre-rendering **8**	the genre, which unfortunately breaks little new ground. Playable
■ LIFESPAN:	The 'what's next?' factor **8**	■ ORIGINALITY:	Seen it, done it **5**	enough, but lacking any real innovation.

7 out of 10

■ PUBLISHER	Acclaim	■ DEVELOPER:	Fun Com
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	United States
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Scrolling hack 'em up

Dragonheart: Fire & Steel

It's a familiar ruse. The **dregs of PlayStation games** never make it to *PSM*'s **discerning palette;** they skulk past with **ne'er a shame,** straight on to the shop shelf. We retrieved six such **stray titles** in our **Quality Control** report (issue 19); over the following pages **we expose four more...**

[1] What's a good fighting game without some skellies? [2] Sir Bowen, it has to be said, has a crap boat. [3] Ooh, that bloody swoopy bird is a pain in the neck. [4] 'Oh, yes? Dost thou think one is a bit tasty, then?' [5] Buy olde stuffe here. [6] Yikes! Big spumey serpent. (Inset) A dragon, yesterday.
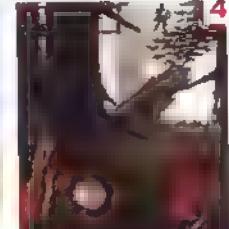
You've probably seen this in the shops already, which is obviously a bad omen. Any half-decent title shouldn't be ashamed to make its debut in this hallowed organ before appearing, plastic-clad and booklet-laden, on the shelves of your local store.

This is especially the case with a fairly big-name game like *Dragonheart*, based on the hit (well, we liked it) movie. And, sure enough, our dreams of a 3D polygon dragon-riding epic – like *Panzer Dragoon* on the Saturn – were dashed. *Dragonheart: Hack & Slash* is a **horizontally-scrolling slice 'em up with a bit of platformy action thrown in.** Chances are you've played something similar (and better) on a 16-bit platform – the Amiga or Mega Drive, perhaps.

Looking like a five-year-old game isn't necessarily a bad thing, look at *Command & Conquer* or *X COM.* However playing like a five-year-old game is a lot less forgivable. Under your control is Sir Bowen (Dennis Quaid out of the flick) who hobbles along, sword in hand, pitched against the massed henchmen of King Einon (David Thewliss in the movie). Bowen has a number of sword attacks, from a nasty poke to a natty upward swipe. Locate the longbow, though, and he can

skewer the evil-doers at long distance. There are power-ups aplenty which imbue him with extra sword-power, additional defences, plus the ability to unleash firey death upon his enemies (which isn't in the film at all). Bowen can also walk, run and jump, oh, he's a talented lad is our Bowen.

There is a riding-on-the-dragon's-back section and a sliver of puzzle action, but it's generally a game of the 'walk, kill, jump, fall in water, die, and start again' variety. So, apart from the c.1990 graphics, predictable gameplay, stodgy sound and criminal waste of a potentially lucrative film licence, *Dragonheart: Sapphire & Steel's* biggest problem is the limited control of Bowen. The on-screen character is cumbersome and slow. He's also horribly two-d mensional. Yes, we know it's a 2D game, but then so is *Super Mario World*, and look how brilliantly controllable Mario is. Bowen, on the other hand, is a sprite: a flat mass of pixels, devoid of life. His limited range of moves (like, you can't jump and strike at the same time. Grr) means that you spend half your time battling the enemy, the other half battling the controls.

And that's really *Dragonheart: Hot & Cold's* biggest crime: *PSM* is prepared to forgive lame visuals and sound, as long as the gameplay is a bit spesh. Er... only this isn't.

[1] What's going on here? That obviously inanimate group of pixels is holding the other at swordpoint. Kind of. [2] And one sword-swipe later...

Alternatively...

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Detailed, yet flat and dated **5**	■ GAMEPLAY:	Walk, jump, hack, slice, die **3**	
■ SOUND:	Medieval tunes with clanky FX **5**	■ PRESENTATION:	Slow save access **5**	
■ LIFESPAN:	Hardly worth the effort **4**	■ ORIGINALITY:	No, No, no, no, no, no **2**	

Dragonheart: Fire & Steel would have boasted top-notch graphics about five years ago. However, the gameplay would have been just as abysmal back then.

3

■ PUBLISHER	Konami	■ DEVELOPER:	In-house
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	Japan
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Sports simulation

Memory card Compatible · Four Players

Konami Open Golf

From those **golfing** *aficionados* in the East? A **sluggish golfing sim** with **crude graphics**, one course, and a **daft power meter...**

[1] Japanese bird in horrific tartan shock. [2] Hit the ball and the stats reveal just how puny your attempt has been. [3] Mark the point of club-on-ball contact with this pair of slidey crosshairs. [4] Look at that pond – it's as flat as a mirror. And just as reflective, suspiciously. [5] You get the action replay every shot. EVERY SINGLE SHOT, whether you want it or not. [6] Check the green's slopingness with Konami's handy-dandy patented Grid-O-Meter™.

W henever Konami release a new game, it's usually some cause for celebration. So how come this one sneaked under the *PSM* radar? Could it be that it's – ulp – not very good? Surely not. After all, it's a golf game and the Japanese love golf; no doubt Konami's developers have made a stunning job of it. Look at Konami's *Golfing Greats* coin-op · that was lovely (for its day). With a shaking hand, and palpitating heart we prise open the case... ah. It's a finished black disc right off the shelf. Uh-oh

The disc goes into the PlayStation. Hmm... nice intro screen, jolly music. Okay so far. A few button presses get us past the array of options (a damn sight easier to negotiate than EA's *PGA Tour Golf*), and into the game proper. **We chortle at the faces on the computer players along the way – they all look like mass murderers.** At long last we're ready to tee off. Check the wind, choose a camera setting, set the direction, adjust your stance, select your club, choose the point of contact between club and ball, then get ready to whack the dimply little blighter.

Now, it's taken as read that to hit the ball, you press the fire button to start, press the button at the top of your swing, and then again to hit the ball (setting the power meter, basically). Everyone does it this way because it's the best way to do it. And if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Sadly, Konami have opted to slap out their electronic monkey wrench and fiddle with one of the great videogame establishments. Instead of the 'press, press, press' of the norm, we have to press-and-hold to set the power, then let go and rapidly press again

to unleash the swing. Duh. Why, Mr Konami, have you done this? It doesn't work. It's clumsy, inaccurate and counter-intuitive

Nonetheless, undaunted we hurl the ball up the long, dark-green bit. We're then 'treated' to a sort of ball-cam view as the polygonal course jerks its way down screen. Then we wait while the computer has its go (smart arse). Then we wait again to have our go. And so it continues until the ball *finally* lands on the light-green bit at the far end. After the whacking, the putting is just as painful, the silly press-hold-release-and-press control remains, and gauging the slope of the green is tricky, even with the grid turned on.

What we have here is yet another uninspired and unnecessarily over-complicated golf sim. It's all there – options, and so on – but it's a bit messy. The graphics are far from slick and it seems to take an age between goes. Admittedly its flaws are minor, so *KOG* remains a very average golf game. But when there are so many above-average ones (and a few real stonkers), why bother to invest in this?

Alternatively...

PGA Tour '98	8/10	PSM2
Actua Golf	8/10	PSM8
PGA Tour '97	7/10	PSM12
Actua Golf 2	7/10	PSM22
World Cup Golf	8/10	PSM5
Virtual Golf	5/10	PSM8
Konami Open Golf	5/10	PSM22

[1] It may look like a normal powermeter, but it's all WRONG! [2] Look, it's golf, for heaven's sake. [3] Wa-heyy! Nudey golf action. Or possibly not...

■ GRAPHICS:	Jerky polygon courses **5**
■ SOUND:	Jaunty muzak **5**
■ LIFESPAN:	If you rope in some mates... ■

■ GAMEPLAY:	Typical golfing fare **5**
■ PRESENTATION:	Option-rich, but slow **6**
■ ORIGINALITY:	One of many **1**

It's a golf sim, sure enough, but lacking in polish, innovation and, er, fun. Not quite showware, but pretty close; we suggest you look elsewhere for clubular activities.

5
out of 10

■ PUBLISHER:	Acclaim	■ DEVELOPER:	Sculptured Software
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	UK
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Sports sim

Six Players · **Multi-tap Compatible**
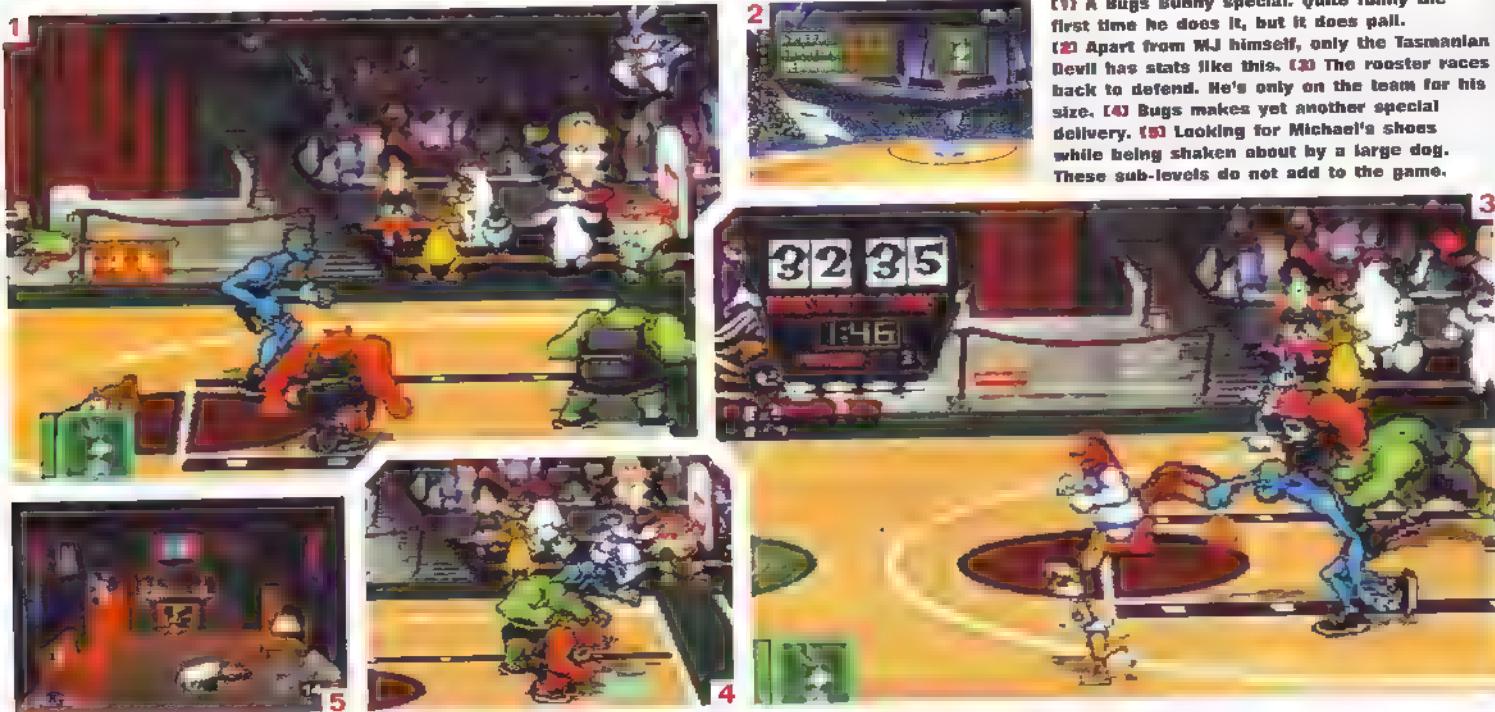
[1] A Bugs Bunny special. Quite funny the first time he does it, but it does pall. [2] Apart from MJ himself, only the Tasmanian Devil has stats like this. [3] The rooster races back to defend. He's only on the team for his size. [4] Bugs makes yet another special delivery. [5] Looking for Michael's shoes while being shaken about by a large dog. These sub-levels do not add to the game.

Space Jam

Michael Jordan plays basketball **with Bugs Bunny.** It sounds a tantalising combination of **cool hoop-shooting** and **big laughs.** It's neither

W ithin the context of this game, the likes of Bugs Bunny, Wylie Coyote and The Tasmanian Devil are nearly as good at basketball as the great MJ himself. Indeed as Michael only plays exhibition games, these Toons make an impressive three-player team for the Intergalactic Tournament. But it doesn't really matter who you pick, as all the players are much of a muchness and most of them are a bit too short for basketball. They do all have special moves to learn, but it's unlikely you'll be playing this game long enough to see many of them.

Take the ball from Michael, or whoever your captain is, and cut a steady furrow down to the other end of the court. Then, when you're in range, you shoot. Two points for Toon Squad. 'Nothing but nets!', as the commentator says. Actually, it's all rubbish and the situation isn't improved by the inclusion of an optional treasure hunt between quarters, where you have to go and find Michael's boots, or kit, to improve your status. Why can't Michael get his own boots? Who's it anyway who's taking the ball off him and running up to the opponents' net and shooting all the points? Doc?

The sub-levels aren't much fun, in any case, and aren't much help in training you, either, as the skill that's most difficult to master is, of course, defending your own net. But if you're consistent in your shooting, and there is a technique, a few three-pointers here and there and the occasional lucky steal should win you the match. And that doesn't say much for the game.

The inclusion of some of the world's funniest cartoon characters should compensate for the lack of gameplay but the jokes are all in the special moves and quickly become tedious. And the graphics aren't up to any slapstick, either. The characters are too far away to be able to see them properly and as soon as they get the ball they've got three opponents trying to shut them down. Time to make a pass if you want to win in style, but not time to amuse yourself with the surreal sight of these funny little guys playing hoops.

The idea of all your favourite Warner Brother stars playing basketball sounds intrinsically amusing but the game sits on the fence between wanting to be a basketball sim and wanting to amuse you. Alas not enough development has gone into this.

Alternatively...

NBA Jam: Tournament Ed.	8/10	PSM1
NBA Jam Extreme	7/10	PSM14
Space Jam	3/10	PSM22

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	For squinty eyes only	1	■ GAMEPLAY:	Laughable	1
■ SOUND:	Icky muzak	2	■ PRESENTATION:	Too many short-cuts	3
■ LIFESPAN:	A few good jokes	5	■ ORIGINALITY:	Yes. Yes. But...	5

It's disappointing, when you imagine what this game could be like, to watch Taz tornado yet another two points home and then not get back to defend.

3

Four Players · Memory card Compatible · Multi-tap Compatible

Play Test

Hyper Tennis: Final Match

If, after Wimbledon, you should decide to get your **fix of tennis** on computer game, **don't make it this one.** It's *Pong* in disguise...

[1] Your opponent cheesily celebrates each of your double-faults like he's just won the final. [2] Ms Stacey misses another golden opportunity to get herself right back in the match. [3] And that's yet another ace against.

S ettle down to the pre-game movie and watch in anticipation as it has a good go at evoking some of the atmosphere of tournament tennis. It would have succeeded a lot better in this if it didn't feature second-rate *Tekken*-style characters whose legs appear to have been replaced with badly fitting prosthetic limbs. That this is the case seems even more likely after you've watched them play tennis. They can run about tirelessly and hit the ball in four different ways, but they can't run about and hit the ball at the same time; they can't make a running shot. All these fantasy tennis stars do is run to a given point and then hit one of their four shots, the choice of which is in no way determined by their approach or posture. This design flaw makes the game pretty much unplayable as anything more than the tuppenny-tart Nineties version of *Pong* that it so clearly is.

You do get a variety of serves but this, the most difficult shot in tennis, becomes worryingly simple as soon as you learn to hit the ball at the highest point

of its trajectory. You can slice it, or spin it into play, but you have no chance of pulling off anything even remotely resembling an American Twist. In a rally, you can again employ slice and spin to mix up with your flat strokes, and you can even include the occasional lob where appropriate. But a short cross will always be outside your repertoire. In fact, you can do pretty much everything you used to be able to do in *Pong* and very little else. What a coincidence.

In short, this is nothing like tennis at all. In fact, it doesn't even get the rules right. If you hit the net on your first serve but don't fault, you lose that serve. The players show no etiquette by celebrating each point, even double faults, with the sort of extravagant victory salutes you'd only expect from the French. And the umpire doesn't bother to announce when a set or the match has been won. At least in *Pong* you could hit a running shot. So play *Pong* instead, and save yourself the £20 or so you'd need to get this one out of the bargain bin where it belongs

Alternatively...

Sampras Extreme Tennis	7/10	PSM9
Break Point	7/10	PSM13
Smash Court Tennis	8/10	PSM14
Davis Cup Tennis	5/10	PSM11
Power Serve Tennis	3/10	PSM2
Hyper Tennis: FM	2/10	PSM22

[1] First serve. [2] The return. [3] All to play for. [4] The tension is palpable. [5] And it seems to be affecting the players [6] It's a bit repetitive, isn't it?

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Untidy **2**	■ GAMEPLAY:	Precious little **2**
■ SOUND:	Plonks and whines **1**	■ PRESENTATION:	Pretentious **2**
■ LIFESPAN:	Hard to win **3**	■ ORIGINALITY:	None **0**

Poor man's *Pong*. It looks as crap as it is and has the most unpleasantly chirpy music that anyone has ever been insensitive enough to put on to a games disc.

2 out of 10

Acclaim
Moreau House, 112 120 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge,
London, SW3 1JJ

0171 344 5000

Activision
Gemin House,133 High Street,West Drayton,Middlesex,
UB11 1BB

01895 456700

BMG Interactive
Bedford House, 69 79 Fulham High Street, London, SW6 3JW

0171 973 0011

Bullfrog
20 Nugent Rd, Surrey Research Park, Guildford, GU2 5AF

01483 579399

Codemasters
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01332 297797

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Electroni...
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...53 549142

Fire Int... ...onal
4-6 Buttercross Court, Northgate, Tickh...

01302 751428

Gremlin
Carver House, 2 4 Carver Street, Sheffield, S1 4FS

0114 275 3423

GT Interacti...
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NW1 6T

0171 258 3791

Inte...
Harleyford Ma... Harleyford, Marlow, Bucks, S 7 2DX

01628 423666

JVC
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Konami
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0171 734 7737

Ocean
2 Castle Street, Manchester, M3 4LZ

0161 832 6633

Psygnosis
Napier Court, Stephenson Way, Wavertree Technology Park,
Liverpool, L13 1HD

0151 282 3000

SCEE
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0171 447 1600

Team 17
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WF5 9JS

01924 267776

Telstar
62-64 Bridge Street, Walton on Thames, Surrey, KT12 1AP

01932 222232

THQ
4, The Parade, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5DH

01372 745222

Virgin
2 Kensington Square, London, W8 5RB

0171 368 2255

TOP SECRET

Beating **Jonah** and his team of **marauding All Blacks** takes some
smooth-playing strategy. Follow these tactics and victory over **New Zealand** will be yours

JONAH LOMU RUGBY

it to your players in space. Catching the ball will

out a tap to your back line will free up the ball
ready for a run up the pitch. More of this later

take a quick throw without forming a line. If it is

forms, you can throw the ball on to the pitch and
surprise the opposition as you dash off

Kick off

1 Unlike a soccer game, the kick-off in *Jonah Lomu
Rugby* is a very tactical manoeuvre. There are
several strategies you can use depending on the

you're up against a weaker team, such as Canada,
make a short kick to the side of the pitch, as you

first play. If you're up against a powerhouse team
such as the All Blacks or the French, take a long
kick straight down the field, being careful not to
pass the goal line. Rather than run with the ball
when it's caught the opposition will stop play and
take a kick to the side-lines, which will give you a
chance to get the ball back

Line out

2 For the uninitiated, a line out in rugby is like a
throw-in in football, only the players will all line
up, ready to catch the ball. This is a good way to
gain possession once you've got used to the timing
of your jump. If you're throwing the ball, you can
choose either a short or long line out – it's best to
start with a short line out if you're a beginner. To
trick the opposition when throwing, hold the X
button when the cursor passes the player you want
to throw to, then release it when the cursor isn't on

player you pressed the button on.

jumping to catch the ball in a line out takes a lot

players are pretty adept at it, even if they're on the
worst team. Make sure that you jump before the
opposition, or you'll never get the ball – don't jump
too early, though, as you'll miss completely. You can
choose to either catch the ball on a line out, or tap

Scrum

3 Winning a scrum really depends on the strength
of your team, especially if the other team puts
the ball in. As soon as the scrum is formed, start
pressing the push button. If you begin to move
backwards, release push and press it again to move

and you are being pushed back, use the dig in

the scrum does cross your line, you can guarantee
that the opposition will score a try. If the scrum is
on the opposition's goal line, try to get as close to

simply make a dive across the line for a try

Goal kick

4 posts so that the goal kick is made easier

the posts. When placing the ball, it's best to move

on the posts. Pull back to put more power into your
kick and then place the arrow as close to the centre
of the goal posts as possible. You'll have to adjust

this position according to the wind direction. You'll also need to take into account the fact that the ball is nearly always hooked when it is kicked. For instance, if you are taking a kick from the middle or the right side, and the wind is coming from the left place the arrow towards the right of the goal posts. This should now cancel out the wind and the natural hooking of the ball. It sounds complicated, but after a few tries you'll get used to it.

Gameplay

5 The way you play the game should really depend on the type of team that you are playing against. If you are playing a strong, fast team, you'll find that you won't be able to play a running game as you'll simply keep getting tackled. Playing against a weak team is an altogether different matter, though you'll be able to pass the ball along the line quite easily, and once you've reached the wing, you should be able to make a dashing run up the outside for a try. When passing the ball along the line, always wait until the tackling player is as close as possible before you pass the ball again. This way, he'll make his tackle as you pass the ball and he'll be taken out of play for a while. You will find as you pass along the line that the ball and your players usually end up going sideways across the pitch. Try to avoid this by running forward as you pass. This way, you won't be waiting until your last man before you make a run for it.

Ruck

6 Running towards the opposition will often result in a ruck or a maul. This part of the game is extremely important as your strategy here will make or break your team. A ruck will occur once a player and the ball have been grounded by a tackle. You have to push the opposition away from the ball and get your players over the top of it. This is done by putting players into the ruck by pressing the Circle button.

However, it isn't just a case of steam-rolling as many players into the ruck as possible, as this may leave your line short once the ball has been released. If it looks as though you are winning the ruck easily, take a few players out of the ruck before you release the ball. This way, you'll have more players in the line to pass to as you make a run for the line. If the ruck is evenly matched, get all of your players into the ruck, and if the man at the back has a yellow cursor, pass the ball as soon as you can. If you find that you are losing the ruck completely and the opposing team is in possession of the ball, take as many players away from the ruck as possible, so that you have some back-up defence for when they release the ball. If you need to get some extra push when in a ruck, make a player leave the ruck, then send him back in. This will give you an extra couple of inches of ground.

Maul

7 Mauling is similar to rucking, only the ball isn't grounded. If you take the ball into a maul, use the Circle button to gain some ground and use the X button to move the ball to the back of the ruck, so

that it can be released. If the maul starts near your opponent's goal line, try to push for as long as possible so that you can go for a try once you decide to release the ball.

Ball possession

8 When playing against stronger teams, you'll find that you are forever rucking and mauling. Once you do get possession of the ball, only try to run it out to the wings if you see some space. If you try and pass it out when the opposing team is all over you, they'll end up stealing the ball for you. The best tactic is to use your forwards as much as possible. Once you are able to release the ball, make a single pass, then run at the opposing team again.

from getting taken down for a little while. If you go into a ruck, pile loads of players in to get quick possession of the ball. If you can keep going like this for long enough, you should make plenty of ground towards the goal line. Just remember to use your rucking and mauling tactics.

Defence

9 Of course, Jonah Lomu Rugby is not all about attacking play. You will often find yourself frantically trying to stop an ever-advancing mound of flesh. Things get quite hectic when you are being over-run, but as long as you keep an eye on the ball at all times, you should be able to at least slow down the advance. The trick to a good defence is to tackle or stop the player with the ball as soon as possible. Once you see them come at you, go for the tackle. If they pass the ball out, change your player using the shoulder buttons and try again. Make sure that a fast team never gets the ball out to the wing, as you'll be hard-pushed to stop them from scoring a try once they've got the ball.

Tackles

10 take-down tackle and the push tackle. The take-down tackle does exactly what it says - takes the player down. The push tackle (Circle button) should stop the player dead in his tracks, causing a maul or a pass. This is best done if a player is close to your goal line, as taking them down will usually score them a try, anyway. The take-down tackle is the best tackle to use most of the time, as it will usually cause a ruck. As long as you send plenty of players into the ruck, you'll have a good chance of gaining possession of the ball after the tackle.

COMMAND & CONQUER

Following on from our guide and full list of level passwords for this classic strategy wargame, here's a cheat that will allow you to see the whole of a level without having to explore it first. Before starting a game, press and hold R1, R2, L1, L2,

Square, Circle then select password or new game. If you select the password option, make sure that you keep the buttons pressed while you enter the password. However this cheat only seems to work on the GDI disc, although you may get it to work on the NOD disc.

To play the Covert Operations missions, simply use the following password on the password screen: COVERTOPS

REBEL ASSAULT 2

Enter the following codes on the Password screen and you'll be able to play every level of the game.
X, Circle, X, Circle, X, Triangle - Easy
X, X, Triangle, Circle, X, Triangle - Medium
Triangle, Square, Square, Square, X, Triangle - Hard

STAR GLADIATOR

Dark Fighting Mode
To enter the dark fighting mode choose your character and hold Down, L2 and R2 until the bout starts

Big Heads
To get those pathetic japanese style big heads enter the following on the character select screen:
Push and hold right, start, circle, square until round one starts

Little Characters
Go to the character select screen and enter the following to play with small characters:
Push and hold left, start, circle, square until round one starts

NEED FOR SPEED 2

Enter the following codes on the password screen (in the case of the two-player game, replace "ME" with "UF" to allow the second player to use the same vehicle):

SHOTME Race on bonus track
POWRUP Faster acceleration
Race as:
LILZIP Bonus car (Ford Indigo)
VANME Van

LIMOME Limo
BUGME VW Beetle
SNOWME Snowplough
ARMYME Army truck
SEMIME Semi
BUSME Bus
LOGME Log
TRAMME Tram
TREXME T-rex
WAGOME Wagon
CRATME Wooden crate
BMRME BMW
LCME Landcruiser
VOVME Volvo station-wagon
BNZME Mercedes Benz
BEETME Car with sunroof

SPIDER

As there's no Level Select for this arachnid platformer, we've printed every single password:

LAB
FMLC939GPR8F3BF7KT1
CHMLC939GPR8F3LWGTS3
86MLC939GPR8F3VFQ5S4
FW1MC939GPR8F3BF7KT1

FACTORY
FW1MC939GPR8F336DTTS3
8SRMC939GPR8F3VTKKT1
WDRQC939FPR8F3LM8S95
8WV5L939GPR8F36DTTS3
8WV5L939GPR8F3G1QJB4

CITY
9WV5L939GPR8F3LRT6S4
6SXXS939GPR8F3LRT6S4
W9PNT839GPR8F389LVS3
N7K83Y19GPR8F3V95HR
N7K83Y19GPR8F3GGK4T3

MUSEUM
F7K83Y19GPR8F3BPFGC3
G7K83Y11GPR8F3BPFGC3
H7K83Y1QFPR8F3QXSDS4
17K83Y1GWPR8F31766D1
K7K83Y1B1S5S8F3QXSDS4
K7K83Y1B1S5S8F3BTQ8B4

SEWER
H7K83Y1B1S5S8F3QS7QC
WZK83Y1V8VP8F3LCIM95
X7K83Y1VLN7BF31CHIC3
Y7K83Y1VV16QF3QS7QC
O7K83Y1LDRTQD3VKCDT

EVIL LAB
Q7K83Y1LDRTQD3LCQSR
R7K83Y1B8H56T1WTY4R4
S7K83Y1B8H56T1TCQSR3
T7K83Y1B8H56T1FNY4R4
T7K83Y1B8H56T1TC4LD
68K83Y1B8H56T1S1PGC4
68K83Y1B8H56T1TMVM3S

Smash the opponents in *Riot*.

Crush the other side in *Jonah*

Lomu Rugby. Blast aliens in

Fade To Black. Further wet your

appetite for destruction with

Time Crisis and *Soul Blade*,

then snarl at *Rayman*'s fiendish

cuteness. Not bad, eh?

Riot

■ PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
■ STYLE:	Futuristic sports
■ PROGRAM:	Playable demo

There isn't a week that goes by without us receiving a letter asking if someone is planning to do a PlayStation version of the Amiga classic, *Speedball 2*. Well, this incredible game zaps you into the future to a time when thousands flock to watch people batter one another in brutal sports.

Until recently this sporting genre was missing from the PlayStation, but the release of *Riot* fills the gap admirably. The game continues from where *Speedball 2* left off, pitting you against a team of tooled-up tyrants, all aiming to break your skull while they stop you popping your power ball into the net.

Riot takes place in a circular arena, with two teams battling for the 'ball'. To score a goal you first have to charge the ball by taking it to the opposite side of the pitch and waving it in front of the green charger. Once fully charged you can take a shot. The goal is suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the arena, so it takes a good throw to get it on target without venturing into the danger zone directly underneath the goal. The further away from the goal you are, the more points you get. Not as simple as it sounds...

■ Controls

↕	Up
↓	Down
←	Left
→	Right
	Not used
	Not used
●	High pass
●	Pass
●	Attack
●	Shoot
▭	Short horn
▭	Long horn
▭	Jump
▭	Walk

■ Additional information

In the full version up to eight players can play using a couple of multi-taps, and 16 different teams are available to use in the exhibition, league or tournament games. And if these aren't enough you can always create your own using the built-in editor.

■ Further information

Riot was acxtually reviewed way back in *PSM*15, although the game has only just been released.

[1] *Riot* is the nearest you get to *Speedball 2* on the PlayStation. [2] An accurate title, as it happens. [3] and [4] Each team has a flashy logo. [5] You can view the action from many angles.

Jonah Lomu Rugby

■ PUBLISHER: Codemasters
■ STYLE: Sports sim
■ PROGRAM: Playable demo

In Jonah Lomu Rugby you can ruck as much as you want, flatten your opponents or just attempt a try if the mood takes you.

By using sprites rather than processor-hungry polygons, Codemasters has worked the graphics so you can see most of the team while you're playing. Adding to the atmosphere of the game is the commentary, by those two masters of waffling, Bill 'Voice of Rugby' McClaren and ex-A Question of Sport pundit Bill Beaumont.

When the demo starts you'll see a series of eight classic games take place. By pressing the kick button during one of these you can take control of one side of the match and continue from that point.

(1) The Irish and Welsh do battle. (2) Use the on-screen hints.

■ Controls
Jonah Lomu uses a great system where the controls change according to the type of play so you have a different control method for a line out than you do for a penalty, and so on. When the controls do change a little icon appears on screen to show you what each button does. Sounds complicated but it soon becomes simple.

Here are some of the most important moves you'll need throughout the game.

Scrum
- ○ Put in
- ○ Pushing in
- ○ Digging in
- ANY [___] Pass

Lineout
- ○ Tap ball
- ○ Catch ball
- ○ Quick throw in
- □ Building a ruck
- ○ Adding players
- ○ Removing players

ANY [___] Removing ball
- ⊗ Grab ball
- ○○○ Grounding a try
- Handing off
  - [___]L [___]L
  - [___]R [___]R
- Passing the ball
  - [___] [___]
  - L[___] L[___]
- L[___] + R[___] Sidestep
- ◎ Smother tackle
- ⊗ Diving tackle

■ Additional Features
Rugby fans wanting loads of options won't be disappointed with Jonah Lomu Rugby. The full game features no less than five different game options from friendlies to tournaments to replays of classic games – and with more than 30 playable teams ranging from Australia to Taiwan there's a team to suit everybody.

■ Further Information
Check out the intensive review in PSM19, in which Jonah Lomu Rugby scored a respectable 7 out of 10.

(1) Jonah Lomu is the best rugby game on any platform. (2) Although sprite-based, the visual detail is high.

Rayman

■ PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
■ STYLE: Platformer
■ PROGRAM: Playable demo

When we first reviewed Rayman back in issue one we said it was one of the cutest games we'd ever seen. What we forgot to mention was that it was also one to the hardest games we'd ever played. So, if platformers are your thing and you fancy one that'll test your skills to the limit, Rayman could well be for you, especially as the game has just been re-released at the very tempting Platinum price.

This demo lets you have a go at the first four sections – the watery Dream Forest where you must plant magic flowers to help you reach the higher platforms, Band Land where the ledges are as slippery as ice and where a good deal of ducking is required, the Blue Mountains where you find yourself among the dissipating clouds, and Picture City where you must use a motorised wig to wing you to safety. No, we're not joking.

■ Controls
- ↑ Up
- ↓ Down
- ← Left
- → Right
- [___] Not used.
- ▶ Pause
- ○ Not used
- ○ Punch
- ◎ Pull face/plant seeds level 1
- ⊗ Jump/Fly
- [___] Duck and crawl left
- [___] Duck and crawl left
- R[___] Duck and crawl right
- [___] Duck and crawl right

■ Additional Features
The full version of Rayman is unbelievably huge – so gargantuan, in fact, that we're not sure exactly how many levels there are. There's a lot of challenge and variety, though, and this is one game you certainly won't finish in an evening ot two.

■ Further Information
Rayman scored a very respectable 7 out of 10 when we reviewed it way back in issue one. It was re-released last month on the Platinum range for the paltry sum of £19.99.

Rayman lopes about in a rather lazy way.

Fade To Black

■ PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
■ STYLE:	Action adventure
■ PROGRAM:	Playable demo

This is a great game. When we reviewed it back in issue eight we said it was a top game at £44.99, so at £19.99 it's bloody marvellous. You play Conrad B Hart, who some of you may remember from the Amiga classic *Flashback*. *Fade To Black* is a huge, sprawling cinematic affair which sees Conrad back in his baseball jacket, jeans and trainers, running, jumping, crouching, shuffling, shooting and puzzle-solving his way through the vast maze of an alien base.

A lot of the problems require Conrad to position himself precisely to open doors, hop over electrical fields to avoid triggering alarms, and so on. It's reasonably simple stuff and enough to keep you constantly on your toes.

■ Controls

↑	Move up
↓	Move down
←	Move left
→	Move right
	Not used
	Not used
△	Not used
□	Get into firing mode, then fire
○	Leap
✕	Jog
	Crouch
	Shuffle left
	Shuffle right
	Not used

■ Additional features
A wonderful 13 levels of 3D alien-blasting action with some fiendish puzzles to solve.

■ Further information
Fade To Black rolled in with a whopping eight marks and carried off a StarPlayer logo in *PSM8*. It is still one of the best arcade adventures on the PlayStation, making it a bargain as a Platinum game.

Don't worry!

[1] Mechanical spider alert. [2] Same jacket and denims eh?

Time Crisis

■ PUBLISHER:	SCEE
■ STYLE:	Shoot 'em-up
■ PROGRAM:	Rolling demo

[1] With the freedom of the NBA licence at

Those of you who don't venture into arcades much might have missed the best lightgun game since *Virtua Cop*, Namco's *Time Crisis*. You play Richard Miller sent on a deadly mission to rescue the President's daughter from the evil criminal Garo.

One of the main reasons *Time Crisis* proved so popular was its revolutionary duck button. This allows you to duck under the nearest table or take cover behind a pillar until the enemies

stopped shooting as well as automatically reloading your gun. As you can see from this demo, Namco is doing a great job with the conversion.

Namco has worked wonders to convert *Time Crisis* to the PlayStation.

■ Additional Features
The PlayStation version of *Time Crisis* will include a huge PlayStation-only level set in a swanky hotel overrun by a selection of new bosses and their legions of henchmen.

■ Further Information
As well as converting the game itself, Namco has also been working on a version of the arcade game's revolutionary lightgun. The result is the new GunCon 45, which is promised to be the most accurate lightgun ever and will be sold bundled with *Time Crisis* itself. See PrePlay on page 62.

Soul Blade

■ PUBLISHER:	SCEE
■ STYLE:	Beat 'em-up
■ PROGRAM:	Rolling demo

Soul Blade is a weapons-based fighting game from the coin-op king, Namco. Featuring the best intro we've ever seen and the fantastic gameplay you'd expect from the team responsible for *Tekken* and *Tekken 2*, it spent a well deserved month at the top of the charts.

Each of the 10 fighters uses a unique weapon style, as well as a fierce range of kicks and punches to batter their opponents. As well as the normal fighting mode, though, the PlayStation conversion also introduced the story-led

Edge Master mode where you fight your way across the world, collecting new weapons and facing opponents in unique situations, each requiring a different method to win. In short, *Soul Blade* is a wonderful arcade game.

■ Additional Features
As well as the usual one-on-one mode, you can fight in teams, against the clock or try your hand at the survival mode. *Soul Blade* also has the best practice mode we've ever seen.

■ Further Information
Soul Blade was reviewed in *PSM19* and received a well deserved 8 out of 10, together with a prestigious StarPlayer award.

[1] *Soul Blade* is another one of Namco's truly excellent PlayStation beat 'em-ups [2] Whereas *Tekken* is hand-to-hand, *Soul Blade* is blessed with a plethora of weapons.

Abe's
Oddysee

Rally
Cross

Actua
Golf 2

V-Rally

ISS Pro is still not quite with us I'm afraid, but as you can see we have three big titles lined up in its absence. And at the time of going to press a few surprises are also shaping up quite nicely. All will be revealed next month.

06

Vol. 2

PlayStation
Magazine CD

Next Month

Double disc issue

Two CDs on one issue – with a huge playable and rolling demo of Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee on an extra CD

East is East and West is West

Special reports on the latest games to come out of Japan and America

At last!
The complete History of the beat 'em up

Everything you wanted to know about the world's most popular genre.

PLUS

F1 '97, Pandemonium 2, Deathtrap Dungeon, PaRappa The Rapper and all the big games to come out of E3.

Scott **Steinberg** is vice president of international marketing with Crystal

Dynamics of America, the developers responsible for *Pandemonium* and *Legacy*

Of Kain. And they're currently working on sequels. Reason enough to extend a

hand across the ocean and thrust UK dictaphone into United States face...

SCOTT STEINBERG

Legacy Of Kain and Pandemonium... not bad for starters. Were you surprised at how well the two games did on the PlayStation?
We weren't terribly shocked at either game's performance. We were actually surprised that *Legacy* didn't get banned, but other than that, we had confidence in both titles.

What was Crystal Dynamics' history in the games industry prior to those two games?
Crystal was founded to develop console games on all next-generation platforms. Our mission is one of 'platform promiscuity'; we build games on viable hardware platforms. Our first shipped on the 3DO, then we published on the Playstation, PC and Saturn. Currently we publish on the Playstation and PC. Generally speaking, Crystal's collective history is primarily from the console world, with a genetic passion for that style of product.

How about yourself? How did you get into the games industry?
I was in the ad business before getting into the games industry. At that time I worked for an agency which won Electronic Arts as an account. It was only then that I realised the coolest jobs in the world were in the gaming industry. When Sega came calling, it was an instantaneous decision to trade in my monkey business suit for Sonic blues.

Have you always been a fan of games?
I have supported this industry with my hard-earned allowance since its inception. Going way back to the Mattel Electronics hand-held sports games (football, basketball, etc) to Atari 2600, ColecoVision and Mattel Intellivision. In fact my brother and I still play *Sea Battle* on the Intellivision every Thanksgiving (of course, he never beats me). And I've never been able to shake my comic book and *Star Trek* addiction.

What now for Crystal Dynamics – can we expect sequels to Legacy and Pandemonium?
We are showing some unbelievable products at E3. *Pandemonium 2* leads the way and thematically takes place several years after the conclusion of the original game. It has a more mature team of characters (leading with the acrobatic Nikki) and even more brilliant graphics and gameplay. *GEX: Enter The Gecko* of course stars GEX, along with our new 3D/free-roaming software engine. GEX is a James Bond-style agent who returns to the Media Dimension for a bout with Rez. GEX luckily still has his spectacular 3D mechanics built into his already God-given physical skills. For players looking for 3D gameplay, more sophisticated than the ol' butt-bounce mechanic, GEX has a roundhouse tail attack as well as wall-climbing skills that realise the true potential in free-roaming 3D gaming. Our third product is a secret 3D adventure game which mixes

battling voodoo cultures with action combat, along with a healthy dose of sophisticated Homer-like mythology. An eclectic mix, don't you think?

Legacy Of Kain didn't seem to be received as well in this country as it was in the States. What do you think the reason for that was? And will that have any bearing on how the sequel is made?
Legacy Of Kain really captured the imagination of the gaming public in the States. The primal qualities of

> **'I've supported this industry since its inception. Going way back to the Mattel Electronics hand-held sports games to Atari 2600, ColecoVision and Mattel Intellivision...'**

gothic vampires, a dramatic storyline and starring a reluctant hero, were qualities never before seen. And relieving blood from the helpless didn't hurt, either. I can't comment on any sequel to *Legacy* – I'd hate to ruin the anticipation – you'll have to wait to hear more later this year.

How about Pandemonium? Can we expect any radical changes to the original?
Yes. After the completion of the first game, the team took a month off for vacation. Upon their return, three things became clear: we wanted the characters to mature, the team returned inspired to be even more graphically bizarre and surrealistic, and we are building more variety into the gameplay mechanics.

What do you think the chief differences between the UK and American markets are?
Nintendo is much stronger in the States. Their leadership in certain categories is very influential to the software publishers as well as to the editorial community. Networking PC products have also arrested more mind space in the US. Playing *Duke Nukem* or *Quake* over the network, or internet, is much more prevalent (and cool).

And does that have much bearing on how American publishers differ to those in the UK?
Since the publishing community plays everything, Nintendo's relative weakness in Europe doesn't negatively affect UK publishers. I think that the consumer market is much more negatively affected by Nintendo's poorer European acceptance.

What do you think of the current state of the PlayStation industry either side of the Atlantic?
It feels like 1992 in the 16-bit era again: fast growth on top of a solid installed base of hardware owners.

We are extremely bullish on Sony in all three markets. We have a relationship with Bandai that brought *Pandemonium* to Japan (titled *Magical Hoppers*) in volumes beyond what most publisher dream about from that market. In Europe, the PlayStation's recent price drop was absolutely per for Crystal in that we shipped *Legacy* nearly right after and saw an amazing spike in sales because it. In the US, things are more competitive, with Nintendo and the PC wrestling for shelf space. B the Sony PlayStation is still our dominant platform

Are there any games that you wish Crystal Dynamics had done?
Absolutely. *Duke Nukem* and *Command & Conque* come to mind immediately. They both nearly got divorced and certainly contributed to biblical dro in Crystal productivity.

Finally, what are you most looking forward seeing in the future? Which games, for instance, are you excited about seeing at E Of course, I'm extremely excited about our game I'm partial to games starring a certain gecko liza *Enter The Gecko* has been in development for cl to two years and our new free-roaming 3D technology formally takes the PlayStation into its third generation of development. *Pandemonium* shaping up to be brilliant. I also have a strange affinity for voodoo adventure games...

PaRappa The Rapper (Sony)
'And kick, punch, kick, kick,